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GREEK POETS

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BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

AUTHOR OF 'SKETCHES IN ITALY AND GREECE'
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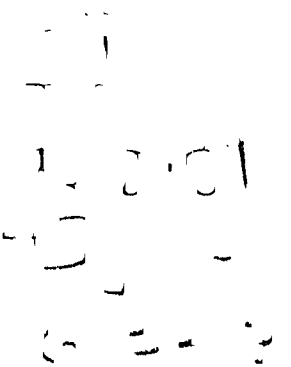

PREFATORY NOTE.

THOSE who wish to read both series of Studies of Greek Poets together will find the order of the chapters to be as follows:—1. The Periods of Greek Literature; 2. Mythology; 3. Achilles; 4. The Women of Homer; 5. Hesiod; 6. Parmenides; 7. Empedocles; 8. The Gnomic Poets; 9. The Satirists; 10. The Lyric Poets; 11. Pindar; 12. Æschylus; 13. Sophocles; 14. Greek Tragedy and Euripides; 15. The Fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; 16. The Fragments of the Lost Tragic Poets; 17. Ancient and Modern Tragedy; 18. Aristophanes; 19. The Fragments of the Comic Poets; 20. The Idyllists; 21. The Anthology; 22. Hero and Leander; 23. The Genius of Greek Art; 24. Conclusion.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

MYTHOLOGY.

The Notion of a Systematic Pantheon.—Homer and Hesiod.—Mythology before Homer.—Supposed Conditions of the Mythopœic Age.—Vico.—The Childhood of the World.—Goethe's Boyhood.—Mythology is a Body of Rudimentary Thought, penetrated with the Spirit of the Nation.—Different Views of the Greek Myths.—Grote.—Relics of a Primitive Revelation.—The Symbolic Hypothesis.—Rationalism and Euhemerus.—Fetishism.—Poetic Theory.—The Linguistic Theory.—Comparative Philology.—Solar Theory.—The Myth of Herakles—Its Solar Interpretation—Its Ethical Significance.—Summary of the Points suggested with regard to Mythology.—Mediæval Myths.—The Action of the Greek Intelligence upon Mythology—In Art—In Philosophy.—Persistence of the National Polytheism.—Homer allegorised at Alexandria.—Triumph of Christianity.—The Greek Pantheon in the Middle Ages.—Greek Mythology recovers Poetic and Artistic Value in the Renaissance . . . . . *page* 1

CHAPTER II.

ACHILLES.

Unity of *Iliad*.—Character of Achilles.—Structure of the whole Poem.—Comparison with other Epics.—Energy Dividing into Anger and Love.—Personality of Achilles.—The Quarrel with Agamemnon.—Pallas Athene.—The Embassy.—Achilles' Foreknowledge of his Death.—The Message of Antilochus.—Interview with Thetis.—The

Shouting in the Trench.—The Speech of Xanthus.—The Pæan over Hector's Corpse.—The Ghost of Patroclus.—The Funeral Obsequies of Patroclus.—Achilles and Priam.—Achilles in Hades.—Achilles considered as a Greek Ideal.—Friendship among the Greeks.—Heroism and Knighthood: Ancient and Modern Chivalry.—The *Myrmidones* of Æschylus.—Achilles and Hector.—Alexander the Great.—The Dæmonic Nature of Achilles . . . . *page* 40

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMEN OF HOMER.

Helen of Troy—Her Eternal Youth—Variety of Legends connected with her.—Stesichorus.—Helen in the *Iliad*.—Helen in the *Odyssey*.—The Treatment of Helen by Æschylus.—Euripidean Handling of her Romance.—Helen in Greek Art.—Quintus Smyrnæus.—Apollonius of Tyana and the Ghost of Achilles.—Helen in the Faust Legend.—Marlowe and Goethe.—Penelope.—Her Home-love.—Calypso and the Isle of Ogygia.—Circe.—The Homeric and the Modern Circe.—Nausicaa—Her Perfect Girlishness.—Briseis and Andromache.—The Sense of Proportion and of Relative Distance in Homer's Pictures.—Andromache and Astyanax.—The Cult of Heroes and Heroines in Greece.—Artistic Presentation of Homeric Persons.—Philostratus . . . . . *page* 72

CHAPTER IV.

HESIOD.

The Difference between the Homeric and the Hesiodic Spirit.—The Personality of Hesiod more distinct than that of Homer.—What we know about his Life.—Perses.—The Hesiodic Rhapsodes.—*Theogony* and *Works and Days*.—Didactic Poetry.—The Story of Prometheus.—Greek and Hebrew Myths of the Fall.—The Allegorical Element in the Promethean Legend.—The Titans.—The Canto of the Four Ages.—Hesiodic Ethics.—The Golden Age.—Flaxman's Illustrations.—Justice and Virtue.—Labour.—Bourgeois Tone of Hesiod.—Marriage and Women.—The Gnomic Importance of Hesiod for the Early Greeks . . . . . *page* 107

CHAPTER V.

PARMENIDES.

Greek Philosophical Poetry.—The Emergence of Philosophy from Mythology.—The Ionian Sages.—The Pythagoreans.—Anaxagoras.—Democritus.—The Eleatics.—Heraclitus.—Xenophanes of Colophon.—His Critique of the Myths.—Assertion of Monotheism.—Fragments of his Poem on Nature.—Parmenides of Elea.—His Political Importance.—Parmenides in the Dialogues of Plato.—His Metaphysic of Being.—His Natural Philosophy.—The Logic deduced from him by Zeno and Melissus.—Translation of the Fragments of his Poem.—The Dualism of Truth and Opinion.—Impossibility of obtaining Absolute Knowledge . . . . . *page* 131

CHAPTER VI.

ÆSCHYLUS.

Life of Æschylus.—Nature of his Inspiration.—The Theory of Art in the *Ion* of Plato.—Æschylus and Sophocles.—What Æschylus accomplished for the Attic Drama.—His Demiurgic Genius.—Colossal Scale of his Work.—Marlowe.—Oriental Imagery.—Absence of Love as a Motive in his Plays.—The Organic Vitality of his Art.—Opening Scenes.—Messenger.—Chorus.—His Theology.—Destiny in Æschylus.—The Domestic Curse—His Character-drawing—Clytemnestra.—Difficulty of Dealing with the *Prometheus*.—What was his Fault?—How was Zeus justified?—Shelley's Opinion.—The Lost Trilogy of *Prometheus*.—Middle Plays in Trilogies.—Attempt to reconstruct a *Prometheus*.—The Part of Herakles.—Obscurity of the Promethean Legend.—The Free Handling of Myths permitted to the Dramatist.—The *Oresteia*—Its Subject.—The Structure of the Three Plays.—The *Agamemnon*—Its Imagery.—Cassandra.—The Cry of the King.—The Chorus.—Iphigeneia at the Altar.—Menelaus abandoned by Helen.—The Dead Soldiers on the Plains of Troy.—The *Persæ*.—The Crime of Xerxes.—Irony of the Situation.—The Description of the Battle of Salamis.—The Style of Æschylus.—His Religious Feeling . . . . . *page* 152

CHAPTER VII.

SOPHOCLES.

The Personal Beauty of Sophocles—His Life—Stories about Him.—Athens in the Age of Pericles.—Antique Criticism on his Style—Its Perfect Harmony.—Aristotle's Respect for Sophocles.—Character in Greek Tragedy.—Sophocles and Æschylus.—The Religious Feeling of Sophocles.—His Ethics.—Exquisite Proportion observed in his Treatment of the *Dramatis Personæ*.—Power of using Motives.—The *Philoctetes*.—Comparison of the *Choëphoræ* and the *Electra*.—Climax of the *Œdipus Coloneüs*.—How Sophocles led onward to Euripides.—The *Trachiniæ*.—Goethe's Remarks on the *Antigone*.—The Tale of Thebes.—*Œdipus Tyrannus*, *Œdipus Coloneüs*, and *Antigone* do not make up a Trilogy.—Story of Laius—The Philosophy of Fate contained in it.—The Oracle.—Analysis of *Œdipus Tyrannus*.—Masterly Treatment of the Character of Œdipus.—Change of Situation in the *Coloneüs*.—Emergence of Antigone into Prominence.—Analysis of the *Antigone*.—The Character of Antigone—Its Beauty.—Contrast afforded by Ismene and by Creon.—Fault in the Climax of the *Antigone*.—The Final Solution of the Laian Curse.—Antigone is not subject to Nemesis . . . . . *page* 214

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FRAGMENTS OF ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, EURIPIDES.

Alexandrian and Byzantine Anthologies.—Titles of the Lost Plays of Æschylus.—The *Lycurgeia*.—The Trilogy on the Story of Achilles.—The Geography of the *Prometheus Unbound*.—Gnomic Character of the Sophoclean Fragments.—Providence, Wealth, Love, Marriage, Mourning.—What is true of the Sophoclean is still more true of the Euripidean Fragments.—Mutilated Plays.—*Phaethon*, *Erechtheus*, *Antiope*, *Danaë*.—Goethe's Restitution of the *Phaethon*.—Passage on Greek Athletes in the *Autolycus*.—Love, Women, Marriage, Domestic Affection, Children.—Death.—Stoical Endurance.—Justice and the Punishment of Sin.—Wealth.—Noble Birth.—Heroism.—Miscellaneous Gnomic Fragments.—The Popularity of Euripides . *page* 266

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST TRAGIC POETS.

Apparent Accident in the Preservation of Greek Poetry.—Criticism among the Ancients.—Formation of Canons.—Libraries.—The Political Vicissitudes of Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople.—Byzantine Scholarship in the Ninth Century.—The Lost MS. of Menander.—Tragic Fragments preserved by the Comic Poets and their Scholiasts; by Athenæus, by Stobæus.—Aristotle.—Tragedy before Æschylus.—Fragments of Aristarchus.—The *Medea* of Neophron.—Ion.—The *Games* of Achæus.—Agathon.—His Character for luxurious Living.—The *Flower*.—Aristotle's Partiality for Agathon.—The Family of Æschylus.—Meletus and Plato among the Tragic Playwrights.—The School of Sophocles.—Influence of Euripides.—Family of Carkinus.—Tragedians ridiculed by Aristophanes.—The *Sisyphus* of Critias.—Cleophon.—Cynical Tragedies ascribed to Diogenes.—Extraordinary Fertility of the Attic Drama.—The Repetition of old Plots.—Mamercus and Dionysius.—Professional Rhetoricians appear as Playwrights.—The School of Isocrates.—The *Centaur* of Chærêmon.—His Style.—The *Themistocles* of Moschion.—The Alexandrian Pleiad.—The *Adonis* of Ptolemy Philopator . . . . . *page* 301

CHAPTER X.

THE COMIC FRAGMENTS.

Three Periods in Attic History.—The Three Kinds of Comedy: Old, Middle, New.—Approximation of Comedy to the Type of Tragedy.—Athenæus as the Source of Comic Fragments.—Fragments of the Old Comedy.—Satire on Women.—Parasites.—Fragments of the Middle Comedy.—Critique of Plato and the Academic Philosophers.—Literary Criticism.—Passages on Sleep and Death.—Attic Slang.—The *Demi-Monde*.—Theophrastus and the Later Rhetoricians.—Cooks and Cookery Books.—Difficulty of Defining the Middle from the New Comedy.—Menander.—Sophocles and Menander.—Epicureanism.—

Menander's Sober Philosophy of Life.—Goethe on Menander.—Philemon.—The Comedy of Manners culminated in Menander.—What we mean by Modernism.—Points of Similarity and Difference between Ancient and Modern Comedy.—The Freedom of Modern Art . . . . . *page* 332

CHAPTER XI.

HERO AND LEANDER.

Virgil's Mention of this Tale.—Ovid and Statius.—Autumnal Poetry.—Confusion between the Mythical Musæus and the Grammarian.—The Introduction of the Poem.—Analysis of the Story.—Hallam's Judgment on Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.—Comparison of Marlowe and Musæus.—Classic and Romantic Art. . . . . *page* 356

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Sculpture, the Greek Art *par excellence*.—Plastic Character of the Greek Genius.—Sterner Aspects of Greek Art.—Subordination of Pain and Discord to Harmony.—Stoic-Epicurean Acceptance of Life.—Sadness of Achilles in the *Odyssey*.—Endurance of Odysseus.—Myth of Prometheus.—Sir H. S. Maine on Progress.—The Essential Relation of all Spiritual Movement to Greek Culture.—Value of the Moral Attitude of the Greeks for us.—Three Points of Greek Ethical Inferiority.—The Conception of Nature.—The System of Marcus Aurelius.—Contrast with the *Imitatio Christi*.—The Modern Scientific Spirit.—Indestructible Elements in the Philosophy of Nature. . *page* 374

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CHAPTER I.

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It has been remarked with justice that, when we use the word Mythology, we are too apt to think of a Pantheon, of a well-defined hierarchy of gods, and demigods, and heroes, all fabulous indeed, but all arranged in one coherent system. This conception of Greek Mythology arises partly from the fact that we learn to know it in dictionaries, compiled from the works of authors who lived long after the age in which myths were produced, and partly from the fact that the conditions under which myth-making was a possibility are so far removed

from us as to be almost unintelligible. Yet there is some truth in what, upon the whole, is an erroneous view. Although the Greek myths, in their origin, were not a well-digested system, still they formed a complete body of national thought, on which the intelligence of the Greek race, in its art and its religion, was continually working, until it took the final form in which we have it in our dictionaries. What remained in the Pantheon of Apollodorus and Hyginus, remained there by no freak of accident. What was omitted by Homer and by Hesiod was omitted by no operation of blind chance. The spirit of the Greeks was concerned in the purification and the preservation of their myths, and the unity of that spirit constitutes the unity of their mythology.

Two great poets gave to Greek mythology the form which it maintained in the historic period. Herodotus says that "Homer and Hesiod named the gods, and settled their genealogies for the Hellenes." What this means is, that at a certain prehistoric epoch, the epoch of Epic poetry, mythology had passed from the primitive and fluid state, and had become the subject-matter of the arts. Between the mythopœic liberty of creation and the collections of the grammarians was interposed the poetry, the sculpture, and the religious ritual of the historic Greeks. What we have to deal with at the present moment is, not mythology as it appears in art, but the genesis of the myths conceived as a body of Greek thought and fancy in their infantine or rudimentary stages.

What was mythology before Homer? How did it come into existence? How were the Greeks brought to believe that there was a supreme father of gods and men called Zeus, a wise patroness of arts and sciences called Pallas, a pure and glorious and far-darting deity called Phœbus? There is no one who does not acknowledge something sublime and beautiful in this part of the Greek mythology. Even those who do not care to comprehend the growth of these conceptions, admit that

the genius of the race shone with splendour peculiar to itself in their creation.

To this question must be counterpoised another. What are we to think about the many repulsive, grotesque, and hideous elements of Greek mythology—the incest and adultery of Zeus, the cannibalism of Cronos, the profligacy of Aphrodite, the cruelty of Phœbus? When thought began to be conscious of itself in Greece these abominations moved the anger of the philosophers. Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Pindar, and Plato, in succession, recognised that the mythical fables were incompatible with the notion of deity, and rejected them forthwith. Modern students have been so disgusted by the same indecencies that some of them have abandoned Greek mythology as hopeless, while others have taken refuge in the extraordinary paradox that myths are a disease of language. These methods of dealing with the problem are alike unphilosophical. It is impossible for the historian to reject what formed the groundwork of religious and artistic thought in Greece. It is childish to represent the human mind as a sort of bound Mazeppa, stretched helpless on the wild horse, Language, which carries it away into the wilderness.

In order to understand the two questions which have been propounded, we must make a demand upon our imagination, and endeavour to return, in thought at least, to the conditions of a people in the mythopœic age—the age, that is to say, in which not only were myths naturally made, but all the thinking of a nation took the form of myths. We must go back to a time when there were no written records, when there were no systems of thought, when language had not been subjected to analysis of any kind, when abstract notions were unknown, when science had not begun to exist, when history was impossible, and when the whole world was a land of miracles. There was no check then laid upon fancy, because nothing as yet was conceived as thought, but everything existed as sensation. In

this infancy the nation told itself stories, and believed in them. The same faculties of the mind which afterwards gave birth to poetry and theology, philosophy and statecraft, science and history, were now so ill-defined and merely germinal that they produced but fables. Yet these faculties were vigorous and vivid. The fables they produced were infinite in number and variety, beautiful, and so pregnant with thought under the guise of fancy that long centuries scarcely sufficed for disengaging all that they contained. In dealing with Greek mythology it must be remembered that the nation with whose mythopœic imagination we are concerned, was the Greek nation.* It had already in itself all Hellas, as the seed enfolds the plant.

A famous passage in Vico's work *Della Metafisica Poetica* may here be paraphrased, in order to make the conditions under which we must imagine myths to have arisen more intelligible:† "Poetry, which was the first form of wisdom, began with a system of thought, not reasoned or abstract, as ours is now, but felt and imagined, as was natural in the case of those primitive human beings who had developed no reasoning faculties, but were all made up of senses in the highest physical perfection, and of the most vigorous imaginations. In their total ignorance of causes they wondered at everything; and their poetry was all divine, because they ascribed to gods the objects of their wonder, and thought that beings like themselves but greater could alone have caused them. Thus they were like children, whom we notice taking into their hands inanimate things, and playing and talking with them as though they were

* For this reason the analogy of existing barbarous races will not help us much, inasmuch as they are not Greeks nor destined to be Greeks. This consideration ought to weigh with those who, struck by the depth and beauty of some Greek myths, theorise a corruption of primitive revelation or pure theology to explain them. They ought to remember that they are dealing with the myths of Greeks, our masters in philosophy and poetry and art.

† The original is quoted in the notes to Grote, vol. i. p. 474.

living persons. When thunder terrified them, they attributed their own nature to the phenomenon ; and, being apt to express their most violent passions by howls and roarings, they conceived heaven as a vast body, which gave notice of its anger by lightnings and thunderings. The whole of nature, in like manner, they imagined to be a vast animated body, capable of feeling and passion." Vico then proceeds to point out how difficult it is for us who, through long centuries, have removed ourselves as far as possible from the life of the instincts, senses, and imagination, whose language has become full of abstract terms, whose conception of the universe has been formed by science, whose thought is critical and reflective, and who have been educated in a rational theology, to comprehend the attitude of primitive humanity in its personifying stage of thought.

In this childhood of the world, when the Greek myths came into existence, the sun was called a shepherd, and the clouds were his sheep; or an archer, and the sunbeams were his arrows. It was easier then to think of the sea as a husky-voiced and turbulent old man, whose true form none might clearly know, because he changed so often and was so secret in his ways, who shook the earth in his anger, and had the white-maned billows of the deep for horses, than to form a theory of the tides. The spring of the year became a beautiful youth, beloved by the whole earth, or beloved like Hyacinthus by the sun, or like Adonis by the queen of beauty, over whom the fate of death was suspended, and for whose loss annual mourning was made. Such tales the Greeks told themselves in their youth; and it would be wrong to suppose that deliberate fiction played any part in their creation. To conceive of the world thus was natural to the whole race; and the tales that sprang up formed the substance of their intellectual activity. Here, then, if anywhere, we watch the process of a people in its entirety contributing to form a body of imaginative thought, projecting itself in a common and unconscious work of art.

Nor will it avail to demur that behind the Greeks there stretched a dim and distant past, that many of their myths had already taken shape to some extent before the separation of the Aryan families. That is now an ascertained fact, the bearings of which will have to be discussed further on in this chapter. For the moment it is enough to reply that, not the similarities, but the differences, brought to light by the study of comparative mythology, are important for the historian of each several race. The raw material of silk may interest the merchant or the man of science; the artist cares for the manufactured fabric, with its curious patterns and refulgent hues.

In order further to illustrate the conditions of the mythopœic age, a passage from the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of Goethe might be quoted. If it is not a mere fancy to suppose that the individual lives, to some extent at least, in his own self the life of humanity, and therefore to conclude that the childhood of the world can be mirrored in the childhood of a man, a poet like Goethe is precisely fitted, by the record of his own boyhood, to throw light upon the early operations of the human mind. For, in one sense of the term, the mythopœic faculty never dies with poets; in their own persons they prolong the youth and adolescence of the race, retaining the faculty, now lost to nearly all, of looking on the universe as living. Goethe, then, relates that when he was at school at Frankfort, he used to invent stories about himself and the places he frequented, half consciously, and half by a spontaneous working of his fancy. These stories he told to his schoolfellows so vividly that they accepted them as fact. "It greatly rejoiced them," he says, "to know that such wonderful things could befall one of their own playmates; nor was it any harm that they did not understand how I could find time and space for such adventures, as they must have been pretty well aware of all my comings and goings, and how I was occupied the whole day." He goes on to recount one of these marvellous narratives. The scene of it was laid in Frankfort,

in a street familiar to his schoolfellows. Down this street, which had a long blank wall surmounted by trees, he supposed himself to have been walking one day, and to have found a door in the wall, not noticed by him on any previous occasion. His curiosity being aroused, he knocked at the door, and after some delay was admitted. Inside he found a garden full of wonders, fountains, and fair nymphs, exotic shrubs, and quaint old men, magicians, knights, sylphs, and all the proper furniture of a romance. Goethe's comrades, the first time that they heard him describe this enchanted pleasure-ground in glowing terms, already more than half believed in its existence; "and," says the poet, "each of them visited alone the place, without confiding it to me or to the others, and discovered the nut-trees," but none found the door. Still, they did not disbelieve what Goethe told them, but preferred to imagine that the magic door had once at least been seen by him, and opened for him only, though it remained invisible and closed for them. And herein they were literally right, for Goethe trod an enchanted ground of poetry which few can hope to win. The story proved so fascinating that he had to tell it over and over again, always repeating the same order of events, until, he says, "by the uniformity of the narrative I converted the fable into truth in the minds of my hearers."

This, then, may be used as an illustration of the mythopœic faculty. All that was needed for the growth of myths was creative mind on the one side and receptive and believing mind on the other. It did not, probably, require a Goethe to make a myth, though we may still believe that the greatest and best myths owed their form to the intervention at some period of unknown and unacknowledged Goethes. When the logical faculty was in abeyance, when the critical faculty had not been aroused, when sympathy was quick, language fertile, fancy exuberant, and belief sincere, there was nothing to check mythopoetry. The nation had to make the step from boyhood

to adolescence before the impulse ceased; nor was there any education from without in a fixed body of systematised knowledge to coerce its freedom. Forming the first activity of the intellect, it held in solution, as it were, the rudiments of religion and morality, of psychological reflection, of politics, geography, and history. Had there been any one to ask the myth-maker: Who told you this strange tale? what is your authority for imposing it upon us? he would have answered: The goddess told me, the divine daughter of memory, as I walked alone. And this he would sincerely and conscientiously have believed; and those who heard him would have given credence to his words: and thus his intuitions became their intuitions. Creative faculty and credence, insight and sympathy, two forms of the same as yet scarcely divided operation of the mind, gave permanence to myths. What the fathers received they transmitted to their sons. Successive generations dealt freely with them, moulding and re-modelling, within the limits set upon the genius of the race. Hundreds may have been produced simultaneously, and among them must have raged a fierce struggle for existence, so that multitudes perished or were hopelessly defaced, just as in the animal and vegetable kingdom whole species disappear or survive only in fragments and fossils.

It cannot be too often repeated that the power which presided over the transmission of the myths was the spirit of the people: an inherent selective instinct in the nation determined which of them should ultimately survive; and thus a body of legend, truly national, was formed, in which the nation saw itself reflected. When, therefore, we say that Greek Mythology is Hellenic and original, we are admitting this unconscious, silent, steady, irresistible faculty of the mind to fashion gods in its own image, to come to a knowledge of itself in its divinities, to create a glorified likeness of all that it admires in its own nature, to deify its truest and its best, and to

invest its thought in an imperishable form of art. Nor will it here again avail to demur that Zeus was originally the open sky, Pallas the dawn, Phœbus and Artemis the sun and moon. The student of the Greeks accepts this information placidly and gratefully from the philologer; but he passes immediately beyond it. For him Zeus, Pallas, Phœbus, Artemis are no longer any more the sky and dawn, the sun and moon. Whatever their origin may have been, the very mythopœic process placed them in quite a different and more important relation to Greek thought when it handed them over to Hesiod and Homer, to Pindar and Æschylus, to Pheidias and Polygnotus.

To discuss the bearings of the linguistic and solar theories of mythology may be reserved for another part of this essay. It is enough, at this point, to bear in mind that there was nothing in the consciousness of the prehistoric Greeks which did not take the form of myth. Consequently their mythology, instead of being a compact system of polytheism, is really a whole mass of thought, belonging to a particular period of human history, when it was impossible to think except by pictures, or to record impressions of the world except in stories. That all these tales are religious or semi-religious—concerned, that is to say, with deities—must be explained by the tendency of mankind at an early period of culture to conceive the powers of nature as persons, and to dignify them with superhuman attributes. To the apprehension of infantine humanity everything is a god. Viewed even as a Pantheon, reduced to rule and order by subsequent reflection, Greek Mythology is, therefore, a mass of the most heterogeneous materials. Side by side with some of the sublimest and most beautiful conceptions which the mind has ever produced, we find in it much that is absurd and trivial and revolting. Different ages and conditions of thought have left their products embedded in its strange conglomerate. While it contains fragments of fossilised stories,

the meaning of which has either been misunderstood or can only be explained by reference to barbaric customs, it also contains, emergent from the rest and towering above the rubbish, the serene forms of the Olympians. Those furnish the vital and important elements of Greek mythology. To perfect them was the work of poets and sculptors in the brief, bright, blooming time of Hellas: yet, when we pay these deities homage in the temple of the human spirit, let us not forget that they first received form in the mythopœic age—the age of "the disease of language," as Max Müller whimsically states it.

In order to comprehend a problem so complex as that which is offered by mythology we must not be satisfied with approaching it from one point of view, but must sift opinion, submit our theory to the crucible in more than one experiment, and, after all our labour, be content to find that much remains still unexplained. Therefore, it will not do to accept without further inquiry the general description of the mythopœic faculty which has just been advanced. After examining the various methods which may be adopted for dealing with the myths, and welcoming the light which can be thrown upon the subject from different quarters, it will, perhaps, be possible to return to the original position with a fuller understanding of the problem. If nothing else be gained by this process, it is, at least, useful to be reminded that intricate historical questions cannot be settled by one answer alone; that a variety of agencies must be admitted; and that the domination of a favourite hypothesis is prejudicial to the end which serious inquiry has in view.

Regarding the Greek myths in their totality as a thickly-tufted jungle of inexplicable stories, and presupposing the activity of the mythopœic faculty to be a play of irrational fancy, it is possible for the political historian to state them as he finds them, and then to pass on and to disregard them. This is, practically speaking, what Grote has done, though

the luminous and exhaustive treatment of mythology in his sixteenth chapter proves his complete mastery of the subject from the philosophic point of view. Solely occupied with history, and especially interested in political history, when he has once recognised "the uselessness of digging for a supposed basis of truth" in legends which relate to "a past which was never present," he is justified in leaving them alone. The strong political bias which concentrates attention upon the development of constitutions and the history of States, while it throws the æsthetic activity of the race into the background, sufficiently accounts for this negative relation to the myths. Its value for our purpose consists in the recognition that mythology must not be confounded with history.

Another method of dealing with mythology requires a passing notice, and a brief dismissal. It has not unfrequently been suggested at uncritical periods of culture, and by uncritical minds in our own age, that the Greek myths are the degradation of primitive truth revealed to mankind by God. As they are Christians who advance this view, the essential dogmas of Christianity are sought for in the Greek Pantheon. The three persons of the Trinity, the personality of the devil, the Divine Redeemer, and so forth, are read into the sagas of Kronos, and Prometheus, and Phœbus. To bring arguments against a theory so visionary, and so devoid of real historical imagination, would be superfluous. Otherwise it might be questioned how a primitive revelation, after undergoing such complete disintegration and debasement, blossomed forth again into the æsthetical beauty which no one can deny to be the special property of the Greek race. According to the terms of the hypothesis, a primal truth was first degraded, so as to lose its spiritual character; and then, from this corruption of decay, arose a polytheism eminently artistic, which produced works of beauty in their kind unsurpassable, but in

their essence diverse from the starting-point of revelation. Moreover, the very dogmas which these visionaries detect in Greek mythology, had a historical development posterior to the formation of the Greek Olympus. It was, for instance, the Greek genius in its old age which gave the substantiality of thought to the doctrine of the Trinity. The only good to be got from the consideration of this vain method is the conviction that a problem like that of Greek mythology must be studied in itself and for itself. Whatever its antecedents may have been, its outgrowth in poetry, philosophy, and sculpture—in other words, its realised or permanent manifestation—is not Christian, and has nothing but general human elements in common with Christianity.

A third hypothesis for the explanation of Greek myths, which used to find much favour with the learned, may be stated thus. Myths were originally invented by priests and sages, in order to convey to the popular mind weighty truths and doctrines which could not be communicated in abstract terms to weak intelligences. Thus, each myth was a dark speech uttered in parables. The first fatal objection to this theory is that it does not fulfil its own conditions. To extract a body of doctrine from the vast majority of the myths is not possible. Moreover, it is an inversion of the natural order to assume that priests and sages in a very early age of culture should have been able to arrive at profound truth, and clever enough to clothe it in parable, and yet that, as the nation grew in mental power, the truths should have been forgotten, and the symbols which expressed them have been taken as truth in and for itself. Without, however, entering into a discussion of this hypothesis in detail, it is enough to point out that it implies the same incapacity for realising the early conditions of society which is involved in Locke's and Adam Smith's theory of the Origin of Language. It presupposes fully-developed intelligence, whereas we are

concerned precisely with the first and germinal commencement of intelligence. At the same time there is a certain foundation for the symbolic theory. Just in the same way as all language is unconsciously metaphorical, so all myths are parabolical, inasmuch as they involve the operation of thought seeking to express itself externally. The mistake lies in maintaining that the parabolic form was deliberately used in the prehistoric period. Its deliberate employment must rather be confined to the age of self-conscious thinking. Thus the myths by which Plato illustrated his philosophy, the Empedoclean parable of Love and Hate, the Choice of Herakles invented by the sophist Prodicus, are purposely symbolical. It is also worth noticing that, among genuine myths, those which seem to justify this hypothesis are of comparatively late origin, or are immediately concerned with psychological questions—such, for example, as the myths of Cupid and Psyche and of Pandora and Epimetheus.

A fourth way of dealing with mythology is to rationalise it, by assuming that all the marvellous stories told about the gods and heroes had historical foundation in the past. Myths, according to this method, become the reminiscences of actual facts, the biographies of persons, which in course of time have lost their positive truth. In order to recover and reconstitute that truth, it is necessary to reduce them to prose. Thus Hecatæus, who was one of the earliest among the Greeks to attempt this interpretation, declared that Geryon was a king of Epirus, and that Cerberus was a serpent haunting the caverns of Cape Tænarus. Herodotus, in like manner, explained the sacred black dove of Dodona by saying that she was a woman, who came from Egyptian Thebes, and introduced a peculiar cult of Zeus into Hellas. After the same fashion, Python, slain by Phœbus, was supposed to have been a troublesome freebooter. Æolus was changed into a weather-wise seaman, the Centaurs into horsemen, Atlas into an astronomer, Hera-

kles into a strong-limbed knight-errant. It was when the old feeling for the myths had died out among the learned, when physical hypotheses were adopted for the explanation of the heavens and the earth instead of the religious belief in nature-deities, and when prose had usurped on poetry, that this theory was worked into a system. Euhemerus, the contemporary of the Macedonian Cassander, wrote a kind of novel in which he made out that all the gods and heroes had once been men. Ennius translated this work into Latin, and the rationalising method was called Euhemerism. The hold which it has retained upon the minds of succeeding ages is sufficient to show that it readily approves itself to the understanding. It seems to make everything quite smooth and easy. When, for instance, we read the revolting legend of Pasiphaë we like to fancy that after all she only fell in love with a captain called Taurus, and that Dædalus was an artful go-between. Unfortunately, however, there is no guide more delusive than Euhemerism. It destroys the true value of mythology, considered as the expression of primitive thought and fancy, reducing it to a mere decayed and weed-grown ruin of prosaic fact. Plato was right when he refused to rationalise the myths, and when, by his own use of myths, he showed their proper nature as the vehicle for thoughts as yet incapable of more exact expression. At the same time it would be unphilosophical to deny that real persons and actual events have supplied in some cases the subject-matter of mythology. The wanderings of Odysseus, the Trojan War, the voyage of the Argonauts, the kingdom of Minos, the achievements of Herakles, have, all of them, the appearance of dimly-preserved or poetised history. Yet to seek to reconstruct history from them, "to dig for a supposed basis of truth" in them, is idle. The real thing to bear in mind is that great men and stirring events must have been remembered even in the mythopœic age, and that to eliminate them from the national consciousness would have been impossible.

A nucleus of fact may, therefore, have formed the basis of certain myths, just as a wire immersed in a solution of salts will cause the fluid to condense in crystals round it. But, as in the case just used by way of illustration, we do not see the wire but the crystals after the process has been finished, so in mythology it is not the fact but the fancy which attracts our attention and calls for our consideration. This illustration might be extended so as to apply to any substratum, linguistic, solar, symbolical, or other, that may be supposed to underlie the fancy-fabric of mythology. The truth to be looked for in myths is psychological, not historical, æsthetic rather than positive.

In order to make the relation of actuality to imagination in the mythopœic process still more intelligible, another illustration can be drawn from nature. Pearls are said to be the result of a secretion effused from the pearl-oyster round a piece of grit or thorn inserted between its flesh and the shell in which it lives. To the production of the pearl this extraneous object and the irritation which it causes, are both necessary; yet the pearl is something in itself quite independent of the stimulating substance. Just so the myth, which corresponds to the pearl, is a secretion of the national imagination which has been roused into activity by something accidental and exterior.

It is possible to take a fifth line and to refer mythology to fetishism. Strictly speaking, fetishism can never explain the problem of the mythopœic faculty, except in so far as we may assume it to have formed a necessary stage of human development anterior to polytheism. Greek mythology, together with Greek nature-worship, would, according to this fifth method of interpretation, have to be regarded as a refinement on the savage dread of fetishes. Beginning with a servile prostration before the powers of nature, this attitude of simple awe would have been gradually elevated to the height which it attained in Homer and Hesiod. In the progressive amelioration of the race, myths would thus have occupied a middle place between

the fetish and the free divinities of art. Putting aside all the difficulties which involve the question whether fetishism is rightly regarded as the first attitude of man towards nature, it is clear that the fetishistic hypothesis cannot cover the whole field of our inquiry. What it does do is to offer an explanation of the origin of nature-worship, and to account for the fact that external objects are regarded as living, sentient beings in the myths. Long before the philosophers of Ionia conjectured that the stars are fiery vapours, people fancied they were gods. It has been well observed that the Greeks never speak of a god *of the* sun, or a goddess *of the* moon. They worshipped the sun as a god in Helios, the moon as a goddess in Selene. This direct reference of the mind to natural things as objects of adoration may, possibly, be a purified form of fetishism. But, taken by itself alone, fetishism is not adequate to account for the many-sided, many-featured product of the mythical imagination, which continued active long after the age of savagery. Nor, indeed, have the historians, who attribute great importance to this stage of religious feeling, claimed for it so much.

According to yet a sixth view the myths are to be considered as nothing more or less than poems. This theory is not, at first sight, very different from that which is involved in the first account given of the mythopœic faculty. It is clear that the stories of Galatea, of Pan and Pitys, of Hesperus and Hymenæus, and, in a deeper sense, perhaps, of Prometheus and Pandora, are pure poems. That is to say, the power which produced them was analogous to the power which we observe in poetic creation at the present day, and which has continued the mythopœic age into the nineteenth century. Yet we should lose a great deal in exactitude and fulness of conception if we identified mythology with poetry. Poetry is conscious of its aim; it demands a fixed form; it knows itself to be an art, and, as an art, to be different from religion and distinguished from

history. Now, mythology in its origin was antecedent to all such distinctions, and to all the conscious adaptations of means to ends. Behind the oldest poetry which we possess there looms a background of mythology, substantially existing, already expressed in language, nebulous, potential, containing in itself the germs of all the several productions of the human intellect. The whole intellect is there in embryo; and behind mythology nothing is discoverable but thought and language in the same sphere. Therefore we lose rather than gain by a too strict adherence to what may be termed the poetical hypothesis, although the analogy of poetry, and of poetry alone, places us at the right point of view for comprehending the exercise of the myth-making faculty.

Before completing the circle of inquiry by a return with fuller knowledge to the point from which we started, it is necessary to discuss a seventh way of dealing with the problem, which professes to be alone the truly scientific method. It may be called the Linguistic theory, since it rests upon analysis of language, and maintains that mythology is not so much an independent product of the human mind, expressed in words, as a morbid phase of language, considered as a thing apart. Max Müller, who has given currency to this view in England, states expressly that "Mythology, which was the bane of the ancient world, is in truth a disease of language. A mythe means a word, but a word which, from being a name or an attribute, has been allowed to assume a more substantial existence:" and again, under mythology "I include every case in which language assumes an independent power, and reacts on the mind, instead of being, as it was intended to be, the mere realisation and outward embodiment of the mind." The first thing which strikes a student accustomed to regard mythology as a necessary and important phase in the evolution of thought, when he reads these definitions, is the assumption that μῦθος is synonymous with what we mean by word, instead of including the wider

content of a story told in words. He is thus led to suspect a theory which contrives to make the problem of mythology pass for a branch of philology. Nor can he comprehend in what sense mythology may be called "a disease of language," rather than a disease of the mind which uses language. Does Max Müller mean that language suffered, or that the thinking subject suffered through the action of the bane? He probably means the former; but if so, language must be supposed to live a life apart from thought, triumphing over the freedom of the human mind, and imposing its figments on the intellect. Such a belief might seem due partly to a too exclusive study of language in itself, in the course of which the philologer comes to regard it as disconnected from thought, and partly to the neglect of the fact that it is the same human subject which produces language and myths, that language and thought in their origin are inseparable, but that when language has once been started, it has to serve the various purposes of thought, and lend itself to myth and poem, philosophical analysis and religious dogma. Another point to criticise is the inevitable corollary that the soul of a great nation, like the Greeks, for instance, in the course of its advance to the maturity of art and freedom, passes through a period of derangement and disease, by which its civilisation is vitiated, its vitality poisoned at the root, and all its subsequent achievements tainted; and that this spiritual phthisis can be traced to a sickly state of language, at a very remote historical period, when as yet the nation was scarcely constituted. Seriously to entertain this view is tantamount to maintaining that corruption and disease may be the direct efficient causes of the highest art on which humanity can pride itself, since it is indubitable that the poems of Homer and the sculptures of Pheidias are the direct outgrowth of that "bane of the ancient world," which, to quote another pithy saying of Max Müller, converted *nomine* into *numina*. It is hardly necessary to point out the curious

want of faith in the Welt-Geist (or God) which this implies; the unimaginative habit of mind we should encourage if we failed to discern the excellence of a civilisation that owed its specific character to mythology; the unphilosophical conclusions to which we might be brought if we denied that the intelligence is free while following the fixed laws of its evolution, and that the essential feature in this evolution is the advance from rudimentary to more developed thought. Language, however potent in reaction upon thought, is after all the vehicle and instrument of thought, and not its master. This leads to yet a further criticism; granting that language was "intended to be the mere realisation and outward embodiment of the mind"—though this is a wide begging of the most difficult of all questions it does not follow that in mythology language is not pursuing its appointed function. If the mythological phase of thought is less apparent among the Semitic than among the Aryan nations, are we to say that this is so because the Semitic languages escaped the whooping-cough of mythology, or not far rather because the mind of the Aryan races had a greater aptitude for mythology, a greater aptitude for art? In the fifth place, the definition of mythology is too wide for the special purpose of the problem. Bacon long ago pointed out that one of the chief sources of error arises from our tendency to mistake words for realities. This imperfect adjustment of language to the purposes of thought is not peculiar to the mythopœic age. When we use such phrases as "vital force," we are designating the results of observation and experience by a word which ought not to be regarded as more than a sign. Yet, because "vital force" has sometimes been recognised as something positive and substantially existent, we cannot on that account call it a myth without impoverishing the resources of language, and making one word do the work of two. The truth, therefore, is, that in the mythopœic, as in every other age, words have done violence to thought, nor need it be contested that the *eidôla fori* were

more potent in the infancy than in the maturity of intelligence. While concerned with this branch of our critique, it is curious to observe the satisfaction with which the advocates of the linguistic theory use it as the means of rehabilitating the moral character of the ancient Greeks, by trying to make out that the tales of Œdipus, Pelops, and Kronos owe their repulsive elements to verbal mistakes. To the student it is undoubtedly a relief to fancy that the incest of Jocasta was originally no more than a figurative way of speaking about the alternations of day and night. He derives, indeed, the same sort of contentment by this method as the rationalist who explains the legend of Pasiphaë upon Euhemeristic principles. Yet it is surely a poor way of whitewashing the imagination of the ancients to have recourse to a theory which sees in myths nothing better than a mange or distemper breaking out in language, and tormenting the human mind for a season. Nor can the theory be stretched so far as to exonerate the nation from its share of interest in these stories. The people who made the supposed linguistic mistakes, delighted in the grotesque and fantastic legends which were produced. Even if words deluded them, their wills were free and their brains at work while under the pernicious influence. The real way of exculpating the conscience of the Greeks, indicated both by philosophy and common sense, is to point out that, in the age of reflection, the tragic poets moralised these very myths, and made them the subject-matter of the gravest art, while the sages instituted a polemic against the confusion of fabulous mythology with the pure notion of Godhead obtained by reflection.

The theory of development which seems to underlie the linguistic doctrine, is that thought in its earliest stage is positive and clear and adequate. The first savage who thinks, sees the sun, for example, and calls it the sun ; but in talking about the sun he begins to use figurative language, and so converts his simple propositions into myths. At this point, argues

the philologer, he goes wrong and becomes the victim of delusions. The fallacy in this view appears to lie in attributing to the simple and sensuous apprehension of the savage the same sort of simplicity as that which we have gained by a process of abstraction, and consequently inferring that the importation of fancy into the thinking process implies a species of degeneracy. The truth seems rather to be quite the contrary. If we grant, for the sake of argument, that the first thoughts are in a certain sense simple, they have nothing in common with the generalisations of the understanding. Except in relation to immediate perceptions, their generality is empty until it has been filled up with the varied matter of the senses and the imagination. Mythology and poetry are, therefore, an advance upon the primitive prose of simple apprehension. What was a mere round ball becomes a dædal world; and it is not till the full cycle of the myth-creating fancy has been exhausted, that the understanding can return upon a higher level by abstraction to intellectual simplicity. The same is true about theology. The first dim sense of the divine in nature as an unity may, possibly, have been prior to the many deities of polytheism: men may have looked upon the open sky and called that god. Yet it was not a retrogression but an advance from that first perception to the mythological fulness and variety which gave concreteness to the notion of the deity. In this way the whole content of human nature—feeling, sense, activity, and so forth—was imported into the original and hollow notion; or, to state the process with greater accuracy, the germ of thought, by unfolding its potentiality, showed that what had seemed a barren unit was a complicated organism with a multiplicity of parts. It remained for a further stage of thought, by reflection and abstraction, to return at a higher level to the conception of intellectual unity. What we have to guard against is the temptation to attribute our own abstractedness, the definiteness of positivism, the purity of monotheism, to the first stage of thought. Ours

is the triumph of the understanding in its vigour over bewildering fulness; theirs was the poverty and nakedness of a first awakening of intelligence. The same critique might be applied to the theory that language starts with universals. Here, again, all turns upon the question, what sort of universals? Unless we are cautious, we run the risk of ending in a view almost identical with the theory of primitive revelation, by following which to its conclusions we are forced to regard the history of the human race, not as a process of development, but as a series of disastrous errors and of gradual decline.

What remains the solid outcome of the linguistic theory is that in the mythopœic age when there was no criticism and no reflection possible, the *idola fori* were far more powerful than now, and consequently many legends were invented to account for words of which the true meaning had been forgotten. Accordingly philology is one of the keys by which the door of mythology may be unlocked. At the same time, considering the complex relations of thought to language, especially in their commencement, it is wrong to concentrate attention upon language. In like manner, it will be admitted that the genders of the nouns contributed their quota to the personification of female and male deities; but it would be wrong to argue that the *numina* were divided into male and female because the *nomina* were so distinguished. In order to appreciate the personifying instinct, we must go back in imagination to a point beyond the divergence of thought and language; and we shall find that if priority can be assigned to either, it will be to thought as that by which alone the human subject can be said to be. Language has sex because sex is a property of the talking being. The deities are male and female, not because their names have genders, but because the thinking being, for whom sex is all-important, thinks its own conditions into the world outside it.

The linguistic theory for the interpretation of mythology is based upon comparative philology, which has proved beyond all contest that the Aryan races had not only their grammar but a certain number of their myths in common before the separation of the Hindhu, Hellenic, and Teutonic stocks. The Vedic literature exhibits the mythological material in rudiment, and its style approximates to that of poetry. Hence it has been assumed that the disease of language was less virulent in the oldest Aryan writings than it afterwards became in Hesiod and Homer. The *nomina* had not as yet been so utterly deformed and corrupted into *numina*. The inefficiency of arguments like this is that they have no value except in relation to a previously adopted view. To the opponent of the linguistic as the only scientific method for the explanation of myths, it is left to answer: What you regard as corruption of language I regard as development of thought. What interests me in Greek mythology is precisely this: that the Aryan poems have passed into complicated stories, illustrative of pure Hellenic modes of thought and feeling, which in their turn will give occasion for epics, dramas, statues, and philosophies. In the same way, the amount of similarity which comparative mythology has demonstrated in the myths of all the members of the Aryan family is, from the Greek historian's point of view, far less important than their differences. The similarity belongs to the stock as it existed in pre-historic times. The differences mark the external conditions and internal qualities of the nations as they played their part in the world's history. The "disease of language" which severally afflicted the Hindhus, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Scandinavians, turns out to be a faithful mirror of their concrete life. Any one, by way of illustration, can work out the problem of national psychology offered by the nature-worship of the sun in Ormuzd, in Phœbus, and in Balder. The pale and beautiful Balder, who must perish and whose death involves the world in wailing; the radiant

and conquering Phœbus, the healing deity, the purifier, the voice of prophecy and poetry and music; Ormuzd, the antagonist of darkness and of evil, the object of desire and adoration to the virtuous and pure; these sun-gods answer to the races, as their geographical conditions and their spirit made them. Nor is this all. The mythology of each nation has a physiognomy and character of its own—that of the Greeks being clearness and articulation in opposition to the formlessness and misty vagueness of the Hindhus. To mistake a Greek tale of deity or hero for a Hindhu tale of deity or hero is impossible. While the student of pre-historical antiquities will, therefore, direct attention to the likeness revealed by comparative mythology, the historian of nations will rather be attracted by those differences which express themselves in mature art, literature, and religion.*

One of the most salient points of similarity between the several families of Aryan myths concerns those which are called solar legends. In all of these we read of children fated to slay their fathers, of strong giants condemned to obey the rule of feeble princes, of heroic young men forced to quit their first love for another woman. The heroes of these stories are marked out in their cradle by miraculous signs and wonders, or are suckled by wild beasts in the absence of their parents; in their youth they slay serpents sent to destroy them; in their manhood they shine forth as conquerors. Their death is not unfrequently caused by slight and unforeseen, though fated, occurrences—by a weapon that strikes the only vulnerable part of their body, in the case of Achilles and Siegfried; by a twig

* The dissimilarity between Greek and Roman religion has often been observed, and will be touched upon below. Supposing it to be proved that the Romans can produce one relic of an Aryan myth in Romulus, we find that their most native deities—Saturnus, Ops, Bellona, Janus, Terminus, Concordia, Fides, Bonus Eventus, and so forth—are abstractions which have nothing in common with Greek or other Aryan legends. They are the characteristic product of the Roman mind, and indicate its habit of hought. In like manner it is only by a crisis amounting to confusion that Mercurius can be identified with Hermes, or Hercules with Herakles.

of mistletoe, in the case of Balder; by a thorn, in the case of Isfendiyar; by an envenomed mantle, in the case of Herakles. One great mythus fascinated the imagination of Norsemen and Hindhus, Greek and Persian, German and Roman; interwove itself with their history; gave a form to their poetry; and assumed a prominent place in their religion. So far, it may be said that comparative philology has established something solid, which is at the same time of vast importance for the student of pre-historical antiquity. It is also not improbable that these legends referred originally to the vicissitudes of the sun in his yearly and daily journeys through the heavens. Thus much may be conceded to the solar theorists, remembering always that this primitive astronomical significance, if it existed, was forgotten by the races for whom the myths became the material of poetry and religion. But, unfortunately, the discovery has been strained beyond its proper limits by students who combine a solar theory with the linguistic in their interpretation of mythology. In their hands all the myths are made to refer to the sun and the moon, to dawn and evening. "The difficulty," says Max Müller, "which I myself have most keenly felt is the monotonous character of the dawn and sun legends. Is everything the dawn? is everything the sun? This question I had asked myself many times before it was addressed me by others." How consistently Professor Max Müller found himself obliged to answer this question in the affirmative is known to every student of his works, not to mention those of Mr. Cox. The handbooks of mythology which are now in vogue in England, expound this solar theory so persistently that it is probable a race is growing up who fancy that the early Greeks talked with most "damnable iteration" of nothing but the weather, and that their conversation on that fruitful topic fell sick of some disease breeding the tales of Thebes and Achilles and Pelops' line, as a child breeds measles. It is therefore necessary to subject it to criticism.

The first point for notice is that mythology lends itself almost as well to meteorological as to solar theories. Kuhn and Schwartz, as Professor Müller himself informs us, arrived at the conclusion that "originally the sun was conceived implicitly as a mere accident in the heavenly scenery." Instead, therefore, of finding the sun and the dawn in all the myths, they are always stumbling upon clouds and winds and thunder. This differing of the doctors is, after all, no great matter. Yet it warns us to be careful in adopting so exclusively as is the present fashion either the solar or the meteorological hypothesis. A second consideration which inclines to caution is the facility of adapting the solar theory to every story, whether fabulous or historical. In this sense the famous tract which proved that Napoleon the Great only existed in the mythical imagination may be taken as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the method. A third ground for suspension of judgment lies in the very elaborate manipulation which the etymologies of such words as Erôs, Erinnys, and the Charites have undergone before they yielded up their solar content. But the multiplication of general objections is not to the present purpose. It is enough to bear in mind that, however important the sun was to the ancient Aryans, he could not have been everything: he was, after all, but one among many objects of interest; and what requires to be still more remembered, is that the Greeks themselves, in dealing with the tales of Achilles, or of Kephalos and Prokris, did not know that they were handling solar stories. It is, therefore, misleading to base handbooks which serve as introductions to Greek literature and art, upon speculation about the solar groundwork of the myths. In the works of Homer and Hesiod, of Æschylus and Sophocles, the myths were animated with spiritual, intellectual, and moral life. To draw the lessons from them which those poets drew, to demonstrate the grandeur of the imagination which could deal with those

primæval tragic tales, should be the object of the educator; not to fill his pages with extremely doubtful matter about sun and dawn *ad infinitum*. The true relation of the solar theory to a Greek myth may be illustrated by the tale of Herakles, whom the Greeks themselves may perhaps have recognised as a solar deity, since Herodotus identified him with a Phœnician god.* We are therefore justified in dealing with this hero as a personification of the sun. Herakles is the child of Zeus. He strangles in his cradle the serpents of the night. He loves Iole, or the violet-coloured clouds of dawn. He performs twelve labours, corresponding to the twelve months of the solar year. He dies of a poisoned robe amid flames that may be taken for the blood-red sunset clouds. The maiden Iole, now evening and not morning, visits him again in death; and he ascends from his funeral pyre of empurpled mountain peaks to heaven. Let all this be granted. So far the solar theory carries us. But is this all? In other words, is this, which the current handbooks tell us about Herakles, the pith of the matter as it appeared to the Greeks? When we turn to the *Philosophy of History* of Hegel, who worked by another than the solar method, and was more anxious to discover thoughts than etymologies, we read: "Hercules is among the Hellenes that spiritual humanity which, by native energy, attains Olympus through the twelve far-famed labours; but the foreign idea that lies at the basis, is the sun completing its revolution through the twelve signs of the Zodiac." Here we touch the truth. The solar foundation of the mythus is wholly valueless and unimportant—in other words, is alien to its essence, when compared with the moral import it acquired among the Greeks. It is the conception of life-long service to duty, of strength combined with patience, of glory followed at the cost of ease, of godhead achieved by manhood through arduous endeavour—it is this that is really vital in the myth

* ii. 44.

of Herakles. By right of this the legend entered the sphere of religion and of art. In this spirit the sophist enlarged upon it, when he told how Herakles in his youth chose virtue with toil rather than pleasure, incorporating thus the high morality of Hesiod with the mythical element. If myths like these are in any sense diseased words about the sun, we must go further and call them immortalised words, words that have attained eternal significance by dying of the disease that afflicted them. The same remarks apply to all the solar and lunar stories—to Achilles, Endymion, Kephalos, and all the rest. As solar myths these tales had died to the Greeks. As poems, highly capable of artistic treatment, in sculpture, or in verse, pregnant with humanity, fit to form the subject of dramatic presentation or ethical debate, they retained incalculable value. The soul of the nation was in them. And that is their value for us.

To deny the important part which the sun, like the earth or the sea, played in early mythology would be absurd. To dispute the illumination which comparative philology has thrown, not only upon the problem of the myths, but also upon the early unity of races until recently divided in our thought, would be still more ridiculous. The point at issue is simply this, that in Greek mythology there is far more than linguistic and solar theories can explain, and that *more* is precisely the Greek genius. The philologer from his point of view is justified in directing attention to the verbal husk of myths; but the student of art and literature must keep steadily in view the kernel of thought and feeling which the myths contain. It is only by so doing that the poetry and art which sprang from them can be intelligently studied. Thus the modern text-books of mythology are misleading, in so far as they draw the learner's mind away from subjects of historical importance to bare archæology.

As the result of analysis, the following propositions may

be advanced. In the earliest ages the races to whom we owe languages and literature and art, possessed a faculty which may be called the mythopœic, now almost wholly extinct, or rather superseded by the exercise of other faculties which it contained in embryo. The operation of this faculty was analogous to that of the poetic; that is to say, it was guided by the imagination more than by the dry light of the understanding, and its creative energy varied in proportion to the imaginative vigour of the race which exercised it. The distinction here introduced is all-important; for only thus can we explain the very different nature of the Greek and Roman religions. The tendency to personification which distinguishes mythology was due to the instinct of uncivilised humanity to impute to external objects a consciousness similar to that by which men are governed—in other words, to regard them as living agents with wills and passions like our own. If fetishism be the rudimentary phase of this instinct, polytheism indicates an advance by which the mind has passed from the mere recognition of spiritual power in nature to the investment of that power with personal and corporeal qualities. But just as the imagination varies in degree and force in different races, so will this power of carrying the personifying instinct onward into art be found to vary. The Romans stopped short at allegories; in other words, they did not carry their personification beyond the first stage. The Greeks created divine personalities. Many myths contain moral and philosophical ideas conveyed in parables, and some of them have indubitable reference to real events and persons. But in no case of a primitive and genuine mythus are we to expect deliberate fiction or conscious symbolism, or, again, to seek for a discoverable substratum of solid fact. Entering the sphere of mythology, facts become etherialised into fancies, the actual value of which lies in the expression of the national mind, so that mythical and spiritual are in this respect synonymous. To use a metaphor, a myth is a

Brocken-spectre of the thought which produced it, and owes the features by which we can distinguish it to the specific character of the people among whom it sprang into existence. The analysis of language shows that the whole Aryan family held a great number of their myths in common, that many legends are stories told to account for words and phrases which had lost their original significance, and that in these stories the alternations of night and day and the procession of the seasons played a very important part. Philology can, however, furnish no more than the prolegomena to mythology. After hearing its report, the student of Greek art and literature must take the Greek myths at a Greek valuation—must consider what they were for the Athenians, for example, and not what they had once been. Finally, it may be remembered that to hope for a complete elucidation of a problem so far removed from observation and experiment, would be vain. The conditions of the mythopœic age cannot be reconstituted; and were they to reappear through the destruction of civilisations, the reflective understanding would not be present to examine and record them.

The difficulty which besets the problem of mythology owing to the remote antiquity of the myth-making age, is to some extent removed by observing the operation of the mythopœic faculty in the historic period. Given social circumstances similar, if even only in a limited degree, to those of the prehistoric age; given a defect of the critical and reflective faculty, an absence of fixed records, and a susceptible condition of the popular imagination, myths have always sprung up. While it is not, therefore, possible to find exact analogies to the conditions under which the Greek mythology originated, something may be gained by directing attention to mediæval romance. The legends which in Italy converted Virgil into a magician, the epic cycles of Charles the Great and Arthur, the Lives of the Saints, the fable of Tannhäuser and the Venusberg, the

Spanish tale of Don Juan, and the German tale of Faust, are essentially mythical. What is instructive about mediæval romance for the student of mythology in general, is that here the mythopœic imagination has been either dealing with dim recollections of past history, or else has been constructing for itself a story to express a doctrine. After excluding the hypothesis of conscious working to a prefixed end, we, therefore, find in these legends an illustration of the sense in which the symbolical and rationalistic theories can be said to be justified. In the case of Virgil, the poetry of Rome's greatest singer never ceased to be studied during the darkest years of the dark ages, and his name was familiar even to people who could not read his verse. He was known to have been a Pagan, and at the same time possessed with what then seemed like superhuman knowledge. It followed that he must have been a wizard, and have gained his power and wisdom, by compelling fiends. Having formed this notion of Virgil, the popular fancy ascribed to him all the vast works of architecture and engineering which remained at Rome and Naples, inventing the most curious stories to explain why he had made them. When we turn to the Carlovingian cycle, we discover that the great name of the Frankish Emperor, the memory of his wars, and the fame of his generals have survived and been connected with the crusading enthusiasm which pervaded Europe at a later period. Border-warfare between France and Spain plays a prominent part in this epic, and gradually the figure of Roland usurps upon the more historically important personages. To "dig for a supposed basis of truth" in the Carlovingian cycle would be vain; yet the view is forced upon us that without some historical basis the cycle would not have sprung into existence, or have formed a framework for the thought and feeling of one period of the Middle Ages. The achievements of Arthur must be regarded as still more wholly mythological. The more we inquire into his personality the less we find of

real historical subsistence. A Celtic hero, how created it is impossible to say, becomes the central figure of the most refined romance which occupied the attention of German, French, and British poets in the Middle Ages. Round the fictitious incidents of his biography gathers all that chivalry, with its high sense of humanity and its profound religious mysticism, conceived of purest and most noble; while, at the same time, certain dark and disagreeable details, especially the incestuous union from which Mordred sprang, remind us of the savage and unmoralised origin of the fable. We therefore find in the Arthurian cycle something very much analogous to the Tale of Troy. The dim memory of a national struggle, an astronomical myth, perchance, and many incidents of merely local interest have been blent together and filled with the very spirit of the ages and the races that delighted in the story as a story. This spiritual content gives its value to the epic. Mediæval hagiography furnishes abundant examples of the way in which facts transform themselves into fables, and mythological material is moulded into shape around some well-remembered name, the religious consciousness externalising itself in acts which it attributes to its heroes. When we read the *Fioretti di San Francesco*, we are well aware that the saint lived—his life is one of the chief realities of the thirteenth century; but we perceive that the signs and wonders wrought by him proceed from the imagination of disciples ascribing to St. Francis what belongs partly to the ideal of his own character and partly to that of monastic sanctity in general. In the fable of Tannhäuser we meet with another kind of reminiscence. There is less of fact and more of pure invention. The Pagan past, existent as a sort of dæmonic survival, is localised at Hörsel. The interest, however, consists here wholly in the parabolic meaning—whether Tannhäuser ever existed does not signify. His legend is a poem of the Christian knight ensnared by sin, aroused to a sense of guilt, condemned

by the supreme tribunal of the Church, and pardoned by the grace of God. In like manner, the lust for knowledge, for power, and for pleasure, withheld by God and nature, finds expression in the Faust legend; while inordinate carnal appetite is treated tragically in *Don Juan*. These three legends deserve to be called myths rather than poems in the stricter sense of the word, because they appear at many points and cannot be traced up to three definite artistic sources, while it is clear from their wide acceptance that they embodied thoughts which were held to be of great importance. In them, therefore, we find illustrated the theory which explains mythology by the analogy of poetry. That the mediæval myths which have been mentioned, never attained the importance of Greek mythology, is immediately accounted for by the fact that they sprang up, as it were, under the shadow of philosophy, religion, and history. They belonged to the popular consciousness; and this popular consciousness had no need or opportunity of converting its creatures into a body of beliefs, because both science and orthodoxy existed. In the historic period mythology must always occupy this subordinate position; and, perhaps, this fact might be reflected back as a further argument, if such were needed, against the theories that the Greek myths, while leading onward to the Greek Pantheon and Greek art, originated as an undergrowth beneath the decaying fabric of revealed truth or firmly apprehended philosophical ideas. At all events, both the positive and negative circumstances which we observe in them, confirm the general view of mythology that has been advanced.

The Homeric and Hesiodic poems were interposed between the reflective consciousness of the Greeks in the historic age and the mass of myths already existent in Hellas at the time of their composition, and thus mythology passed into the more advanced stage of art. It did not, however, cease on that account to retain some portion of its original plasticity and fluidity.

It is clear from Pindar and the fragments of the minor lyric poets, from the works of the dramatists, from Plato, and from other sources, that what Herodotus reports about Homer and Hesiod having fixed the genealogies of the gods, cannot be taken too literally. Non-Homeric and non-Hesiodic versions of the same tales were current in various parts of Greece. The same deities in different places received different attributes and different forms of worship; and the same legends were localised in widely separated spots. Each division of the Hellenic family selected its own patron deities, expressing in their cult and ritual the specific characteristics which distinguished Dorian, Æolian, and Ionian Hellas. At the same time certain headquarters of worship, like the shrine of Delphi and the temple of Olympian Zeus, were strictly Panhellenic. In this way it is clear that while Greek mythology acquired the consistence of a national religion, it retained its free poetic character in a great measure. The nation never regarded their myths as a body of fixed dogma to alter which was impious. Great liberty consequently was secured for artists; and it may be said with truth that the Greeks arrived through sculpture at a consciousness of their gods. A new statue was, in a certain sense, a new deity, although the whole aim of the sculptor must, undoubtedly, have been to render visible the thoughts contained in myths and purified by poetry, and so to pass onward step-wise to a fuller and fuller realisation of the spiritual type. It is this unity combined with difference that makes the study of Greek sculpture fascinating in itself, and fruitful for the understanding of the Greek religion.

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to consider how the Greek intelligence was first employed upon the articulation of its mythology, and next upon its criticism. The tradition of a Titanomachy, or contest between nature powers and deities of reason, marks the first step in the former process. The cosmogonical forces personified in the Titans gave place to the pre

siding deities of political life and organised society, in whom the human reason recognised itself as superior to mere nature. Olympus was reserved for gods of intellectual order, and thus the Greeks worshipped what was best and noblest in themselves. At the same time the cosmogonical divinities were not excluded from the Greek Pantheon, and so there grew up a kind of hierarchy of greater and lesser deities. Oceanus, Poseidon, Proteus, the Tritons and the Nereids, Amphitrite and Thetis, for example, are all powers of the sea. They are the sea, conceived under different aspects, its divine personality being multitudinously divided and delicately characterised in each case to accord with the changes in the element. The same kind of articulation is observable in the worship of deities under several attributes. Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos are one as well as two; Erós and Himeros and Pothos are not so much three separate Loves, as Love regarded from three different points of view. Here the hierarchy is psychological, and represents an advance made in reflection upon moral qualities; whereas in the former case it was based on the observation of external nature. To this inquiry, again, belongs the question of imported myths and foreign cults. The worship of Corinthian Aphrodite, for example, was originally Asiatic. Yet, on entering Greek thought, Mylitta ceased to be Oriental and assumed Hellenic form and character. Sensuality was recognised as pertaining to the goddess whose domain included love and beauty and the natural desires.

More than the vaguest outlines of such subjects of interest cannot be indicated here. It is enough to have pointed out that, as Greek mythology was eminently imaginative, fertile in fancy and prolific in dramatic incident, so it found its full development in poetry and art. Only through art can it be rightly comprehended; and the religion for which it supplied the groundwork was itself a kind of art. It is just this artistic quality which distinguished the Greeks from the Romans. As

Mommsen well observes, "there was no formation of legend in the strict sense in Italy." The Italian gods were in their origin more matter-of-fact than Greek gods. They contained from the first a prosaic element which they never threw aside, nor did they give occasion to the growth of fable with its varied fabric of human action and passion. Thus the legal and political genius of the Latin race worshipped its own qualities in these allegorical beings.

The process hitherto described has been the passage of mythology into religion and the expression of religion by art. When the Greek intelligence became reflective in the first dawn of philosophy, it recognised that the notion of divinity, τὸ θεῖον, was independent and in some sense separable from the persons of the Pantheon in whom it inhered. This recognition led to a criticism of the myths by the standard of ideal godhead. Just as the Olympic deities, as representative of pure intellect or spirit, had superseded the bare nature forces, so now the philosophers sought to distil a refined conception of God from the myths in general. Their polemic was directed against Homer, in whom, like Herodotus, they recognised the founder of the current mythological theology. Both Pythagoras and Heraclitus are reported to have said that Homer ought to be publicly thrust from the assembly and scourged. Xenophanes plainly asserted that the Greek anthropomorphism was no better than a worship of humanity with all its vices, illustrating his critique by adding that just in the same way might lions adore lions and horses horses. His own conception of the deity was monotheistic, to this extent at least that he abstracted from the universe a notion of divine power and wisdom, and ascribed to it the only reality. Plato, in the *Republic*, unified these points of view, severely criticising Homer for the immorality of his fictions, and attributing to his own demiurgic deity those qualities of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty which are the highest ideals of the human spirit. In connection with this

polemic against poetical theology, we have to notice the attempts of physical philosophers to explain the universe by natural causes, and the great saying of Anaxagoras that reason rules the world. Thus the speculative understanding, following various lines of thought and adopting diverse theories, tended to react upon mythology and to corrode the ancient fabric of Greek polytheism. In the course of this disintegrating process a new and higher religion was developed, which Plato expressed by saying that we ought "to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like Him is to become holy and just and wise." At the same time those who felt the force of the critique, but could not place themselves at the new scientific point of view, remained sceptical; and against this kind of scepticism, which implied personal lawlessness, Aristophanes directed his satire. Whatever may have been the attitude of philosophers in their schools, mythology meanwhile retained its hold upon the popular mind. It was bound up with the political traditions, the Gentile customs, the ritual, and the arts of the whole race. To displace it by a reasoned system of theology, enforced by nothing stronger than the theories of the sages, was impossible. The extent to which philosophy permanently affected the creed of thinking and religious men in Greece by substituting theism for the fabulous theology of the poets has been well expressed in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*. "So dispassionate a temper," he observes, "a life so pure and unblemished in authority, might well be called Olympian, in accordance with our conceptions of the divine beings to whom, as the natural authors of all good and of nothing evil, we ascribe the rule and government of the world—not as the poets represent, who, while confounding us with their ignorant fancies, are themselves confuted by their own poem and fictions, and call the place, indeed, where they say the gods make their abode 'a secure and quiet seat, untroubled with winds or clouds,' and 'equally through all time illumined with a soft serenity and a pure light,' as though such

were a home most agreeable for a blessed and immortal nature; and yet, in the meanwhile, affirm that the gods themselves are full of trouble and enmity and anger, and other passions, which no way become or belong to even men that have any understanding." It is clear that when the religious consciousness had reached this point of purified clairvoyance, the race was ready for a more spiritual theology, which philosophers like Marcus Aurelius found in natural religion, while the common folk accepted Christianity.

After flowing side by side for many centuries, the currents of mythological belief and of philosophical speculation reunited at Alexandria, where a final attempt was made to animate the Homeric Pantheon with the spirit of metaphysical mysticism. Homer became a priest as well as poet, and the *Iliad* was made to furnish allegories for an age grown old in intellectual subtlety. This was the last period of mythology. While Hypatia was lecturing on Homer the Christians were converting the world. To keep the gods of Greece alive was no longer possible. Regarded from the beginning as persons with a body corresponding to their spiritual substance, they had in them the certainty of dissolution. Though removed ideally beyond the sphere of human chance and change, they remained men and women with passions like our own. Pure spirit had not been realised in them; and blind fate had from the first been held to be supreme above them. Unlike the incarnate God of Christianity, they had not passed forth from the spiritual world to abide here for a season and return to it again. Therefore they perished. During the domination of mediæval Christianity the utmost they could do was to haunt the memory like wraiths and phantoms, to linger in neglected and unholy places like malignant powers of evil. But when the force of ascetic Christianity declined, and the spirit of humane culture reawoke in Europe, these old gods reasserted their ascendancy—no longer as divinities indeed, but as poems forming an essential element of the

imagination. The painters and sculptors of Italy gave once more in breathing marble and fair colour form to those immortal thoughts. The poets sang the old songs of Hellas in new language to new measures. Even the churchmen invoked God from Roman pulpits as *Summus Jupiter*, and dignified Madonna with the attributes of Artemis and Pallas.

Such is the marvellous vitality of this mythology. Such is its indissoluble connection with the art and culture which sprang from it, of which it was the first essential phase, and to which we owe so much. Long after it has died as religion, it lives on as poetry, retaining its original quality, though the theology contained in it has been for ever superseded or absorbed into more spiritual creeds.

NOTE.—I wish to qualify what I have said upon pp. 17-30, by stating that my critique of the linguistic and solar theories is not, as I hope, directed in any impertinent spirit against the illustrious teacher to whom, in common with most Englishmen, I owe nearly all my knowledge of comparative mythology, but rather against notions which have gained currency through a too exclusive attention to the origin of Greek mythology. I want to remind students of Greek literature that, after all they may have learned from Sanskrit, they are still upon the threshold of mythology as it was determined by the genius of the Greek race. There is a danger of diverting the mind from questions of thoughts to questions of words, and leading people to fancy that etymological solutions are final.

CHAPTER II.

ACHILLES.

Unity of *Iliad*.—Character of Achilles.—Structure of the whole Poem.—Comparison with other Epics.—Energy dividing into Anger and Love.—Personality of Achilles.—The quarrel with Agamemnon.—Pallas Athene.—The Embassy.—Achilles' Foreknowledge of his Death.—The Message of Antilochus.—Interview with Thetis.—The Shouting in the Trench.—The Speech of Xanthus.—The Pæan over Hector's Corpse.—The Ghost of Patroclus.—The Funeral Obsequies of Patroclus.—Achilles and Priam.—Achilles in Hades.—Achilles considered as a Greek Ideal.—Friendship among the Greeks.—Heroism and Knighthood: Ancient and Modern Chivalry.—The *Myrmidones* of Æschylus.—Achilles and Hector.—Alexander the Great.—The Dæmonic Nature of Achilles.

It is the sign of a return to healthy criticism that scholars are beginning to acknowledge that the *Iliad* may be one poem—that is to say, no mere patchwork of ballads and minor epics put together by some diaskeuast in the age of Pisistratus, but the work of a single poet, who surveyed his creation as an artist, and was satisfied with its unity. We are not bound to pronounce an opinion as to whether this poet was named Homer, whether Homer ever existed, and, if so, at what period of the world's history he lived. We are not bound to put forward a complete view concerning the college of Homeridæ, from which the poet must have arisen, if he did not found it. Nor, again, need we deny that the *Iliad* itself presents unmistakable signs of having been constructed in a great measure out of material already existing in songs and

romances, dear to the Greek nation in their youth, and familiar to the poet. The æsthetic critic finds no difficulty in conceding, nay, is eager to claim, a long genealogy through antecedent, now forgotten, poems for the *Iliad*. But about this, of one thing, at any rate, he will be sure, after due experience of the tests applied by Wolf and his followers, that a great artist gave its present form to the *Iliad*, that he chose from the whole Trojan tale a central subject for development, and that all the episodes and collateral matter with which he enriched his epic were arranged by him with a view to the effect that he had calculated.

What, then, was this central subject, which gives the unity of a true work of art to the *Iliad*? We answer, the person and the character of Achilles. It is not fanciful to say, with the old grammarians of Alexandria, that the first line of the poem sets forth the whole of its action.

Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus.

The wrath of Achilles and the consequences of that wrath in the misery of the Greeks, left alone to fight without their fated hero; the death of Patroclus, caused by his sullen anger; the energy of Achilles, reawakened by his remorse for his friend's death; and the consequent slaughter of Hector; form the whole of the simple structure of the *Iliad*. This seems clear enough when we analyse the conduct of the poem.

The first book describes the quarrel of Achilles with Agamemnon and his secession from the war. The next seven books and a half, from the second to the middle of the ninth, are occupied with the fortunes of the Greeks and Trojans in the field, the exploits of Diomede and Ajax, and Hector's attack upon the camp. In the middle of the ninth book Achilles reappears upon the scene. Agamemnon sends Ulysses and Phœnix to entreat him to relax his wrath and save the Greeks; but the hero remains obdurate. He has resolved

that his countrymen shall pay the uttermost penalty for the offence of their King. The poet having foredetermined that Achilles shall only consent to fight in order to revenge Patroclus, is obliged to show the inefficacy of the strongest motives from without; and this he has effected by the episode of the embassy. The tenth book relates the night attack upon the camp of the Trojan allies and the theft of the horses of Rhesus. The next five books contain a further account of the warfare carried on among the ships between the Achaians and their foes. It is in the course of these events that Patroclus comes into prominence. We find him attending on the wounded Eurypylus and warning Achilles of the imminent peril of the fleet. At last, in the sixteenth book, when Hector has carried fire to the ship of Protesilaus, Achilles commands Patroclus to assume the armour of Peleus and lead his Myrmidons to war. The same book describes the repulse of Hector and the death of Patroclus, while the seventeenth is taken up with the fight for the body of Achilles' friend. But from the eighteenth onward the true hero assumes his rank as protagonist, making us feel that what has gone before has only been a preface to his action. His seclusion from the war has not only enabled the poet to vary the interest by displaying other characters, but has also proved the final intervention of Achilles to be absolutely necessary for the success of the Greek army. All the threads of interest are gathered together and converge on him. Whatever we have learned concerning the situation of the war, the characters of the chiefs, and the jealousies of the gods, now serves to dignify his single person and to augment the terror he inspires. With his mere shout he dislodges the Trojans from the camp. The divine arms of Hephaestus are fashioned for him, and forth he goes to drive the foe like mice before him. Then he contends with Simoeis and Scamander, the river-gods. Lastly, he slays Hector. What follows in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth books seems to be intended as a repose from the vehement

action and high-wrought passion of the preceding five. Patroclus is buried, and his funeral games are celebrated. Then, at the very end, Achilles appears before us in the interview with Priam, no longer as a petulant spoilt child or fiery barbarian chief, but as a hero, capable of sacrificing his still fierce passion for revenge to the nobler emotion of reverence for the age and sorrow of the sonless king.

The centralisation of interest in the character of Achilles, constitutes the grandeur of the *Iliad*. It is also by this that the *Iliad* is distinguished from all the narrative epics of the world. In the case of all the rest there is one main event, one deed which has to be accomplished, one series of actions with a definite beginning and ending. In none else are the passions of the hero made the main points of the movement. This may be observed at once by comparing the *Iliad* with the chief epical poems of European literature. To begin with the *Odyssey*. The restoration, after many wanderings, of Odysseus to his wife and kingdom forms the subject of this romance. When that has been accomplished, the *Odyssey* is completed. In the same way the subject of the *Æneid* is the foundation of the Trojan kingdom in Italy. Æneas is conducted from Troy to Carthage, from Carthage to Latium. He flies from Dido, because fate has decreed that his empire should not take root in Africa. He conquers Turnus because it is destined that he, and not the Latin prince, should be the ancestor of Roman kings. As soon as Turnus has been killed and Lavinia has been wedded to Æneas, the action of the poem is accomplished and the *Æneid* is completed. When we pass to modern epics, the first that meets us is the *Nibelungen Lied*. Here the action turns upon the murder of Sigfrit by Hagen, and the vengeance of his bride Chriemhilt. As soon as Chriemhilt has assembled her husband's murderers in the halls of King Etzel, and there has compassed their destruction, the subject is complete, the *Nibelungen* is at an end. The British epic of the Round

Table, if we may regard Sir Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* as a poem, centres in the life and predestined death of King Arthur. Upon the fate of Arthur hangs the whole complex series of events which compose the romance. His death is its natural climax, for with him expires the Round Table he had framed to keep the Pagans in awe. After that event nothing remains for the epic poet to relate. Next in date and importance is the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. The action of this poem is bound up with the destinies of Ruggiero and Bradamante. Their separations and wanderings supply the main fabric of the plot. When these are finally ended, and their marriage has been consummated, nothing remains to be related. The theme of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, again, is the conquest of the Holy City from the Saracens. When this has been described, there is nothing left for Tasso to tell. The *Paradise Lost*, in spite of its more stationary character, does not differ from this type. It sets forth the single event of the Fall. After Adam and Eve have disobeyed the commands of their Maker and have been expelled from Eden, the subject is exhausted, the epic is at an end.

Thus each of these great epic poems has one principal event, on which the whole action hinges and which leaves nothing more to be narrated. But with the *Iliad* it is different. At the end of the *Iliad* we leave Achilles with his fate still unaccomplished, the Trojan war still undecided. The *Iliad* has no one great external event or series of events to narrate. It is an episode in the war of Troy, a chapter in the life of Peleus' son. But it does set forth, with the vivid and absorbing interest that attaches to true æsthetic unity, the character of its hero, selecting for that purpose the group of incidents which best display it.

The *Iliad*, therefore, has for its whole subject the Passion of Achilles—that ardent energy or ΜΗΝΙΣ of the hero, which displayed itself first as anger against Agamemnon, and afterwards

as love for the lost Patroclus. The truth of this was perceived by one of the greatest poets and profoundest critics of the modern world, Dante. When Dante, in the *Inferno*, wished to describe Achilles he wrote, with characteristic brevity:—

Achille
Che per amore al fine combatteo.

Achilles
Who at the last was brought to fight by love.

In this pregnant sentence Dante sounded the whole depth of the *Iliad*. The wrath of Achilles against Agamemnon, which prevented him at first from fighting; the love of Achilles, passing the love of women, for Patroclus, which induced him to forego his anger and to fight at last; these are the two poles on which the *Iliad* turns. Two passions—heroic anger and measureless love—in the breast of the chief actor, are the motive forces of the poem. It is this simplicity in the structure of the *Iliad* which constitutes its nobleness. There is no double plot, no attempt to keep our interest alive by misunderstandings, or treacheries, or thwartings of the hero in his aims. These subtleties and resources of art the poet, whom we will call Homer, for the sake of brevity, discards. He trusts to the magnitude of his chief actor, to the sublime central figure of Achilles, for the whole effect of his epic. It is hardly necessary to insist upon the highly tragic value of this subject. The destinies of two great nations hang trembling in the balance. Kings on the earth below, gods in the heavens above, are moved to turn this way or that the scale of war. Meanwhile the whole must wait upon the passions of one man. Nowhere else, in any work of art, has the relation of a single heroic character to the history of the world been set forth with more of tragic pomp and splendid incident. Across the scene on which gods and men are contending in fierce rivalry, moves the lustrous figure of Achilles, ever potent, ever young, but with the ash-white aureole of coming

death around his forehead. He too is in the clutch of destiny. As the price of his decisive action, he must lay his life down and retire with sorrow to the shades. It is thus that in the very dawn of civilisation the Greek poet divined the pathos and expounded the philosophy of human life, showing how the fate of nations may depend upon the passions of a man, who in his turn is but the creature of a day, a ripple on the stream of time. Nothing need be said by the æsthetic critic about the solar theory, which pretends to explain the tale of Troy. The Mythus of Achilles may possibly in very distant ages have expressed some simple astronomical idea. But for a man to think of this with the actual *Iliad* before his eyes would be about as bad as botanising on his mother's grave. Homer was not thinking of the sun when he composed the *Iliad*. He wove, as in a web, all elements of tragic pity and fear, pathos and passion, and fateful energy which constitute the dramas of nations and of men.

In the two passions, anger and love, which form the prominent features of the character of Achilles, there is nothing small or mean. Anger has scarcely less right than ambition to be styled the last infirmity of noble minds. And love, when it gives the motive force to great action, is sublime. The love of Achilles had no softness or effeminacy. The wrath of Achilles never degenerated into savagery. Both of these passions, instead of weakening the hero, add force to his activity. Homer has traced the outlines of the portrait of Achilles so largely that criticism can scarcely avoid dwarfing them. In looking closely at the picture, there is a danger lest, while we examine the parts, we should fail to seize the greatness of the whole. It is better to bring together in rapid succession those passages of the *Iliad* which display the character of Achilles under the double aspect of anger and love. The first scene (i. 148–246) shows us Agamemnon surrounded by the captains of the Greek host, holding the same position among them as Charlemagne

among his peers, or King John among the English Barons. They recognise his heaven-descended right of monarchy; but their allegiance holds by a slight thread. They are not afraid of bearding him, browbeating him with threats, and roundly accusing him of his faults. This turbulent feudal society has been admirably sketched by Marlowe in *Edward II.*, and by Shakspeare in *Richard II.* And it must be remembered that between Agamemnon and the Hellenic βασιλεῖς, there was not even so much as a feudal bond of fealty. Calchas has just told Agamemnon that, in order to avert the plague, Chryseis must be restored to her father. The king has answered that if he is forced to relinquish her, the Greeks must indemnify him richly. Then the anger of Achilles boils over:—

"Ah, clothed upon with impudence, and greedy-souled! How, thinkest thou, can man of the Achaians with glad heart follow at thy word to take the field or fight the foe? Not for the quarrel of the warlike Trojans did I come unto these shores, for they had wronged me not. They never drove my cattle nor my steeds, nor ever, in rich, populous Phthia, did they waste the corn; since far between us lie both shadowy mountains and a sounding sea: but following thee, thou shameless king, we came to gladden thee, for Menelaus and for thee, thou hound, to win you fame from Troy. Of this thou reckest not and hast no care. Yea, and behold thou threatenest even from me to wrest my gueidon with thy hands, for which I sorely strove, and which the sons of the Achaians gave to me. Never, in sooth, do I take equally with thee, when Achaians sack a well-walled Trojan town. My hands do all the work of furious war; but when division comes, thy guerdon is far greater, and I go back with small but well-loved treasure to the ships, tired out with fighting. Now, lo! I am again for Phthia; for better far, I ween, it is homeward to sail with beaked ships: nor do I think that if I stay unhonoured wilt thou get much wealth and gain.

"Him, then, in answer, Agamemnon, king of men, bespake:—

"Away! fly, if thy soul is set on flying. I beg thee not to stay for me. With me are many who will honour me, and most of all, the Counsellor Zeus. Most hateful to me of the Zeus-born kings art thou. For ever dost thou love strife, warfare, wrangling. If very stout of limb thou art, that did God give thee. Go home, then, with thy ships and friends. Go, rule the Myrmidones. I care not for thee, nor regard thy wrath, but this will I threaten—since Phœbus robs me of Chryseis, her with my ship and with my followers will I send; but I will take fair-cheeked Briseis, thy

own prize, and fetch her from thy tent, that thou mayest know how far thy better I am, and that others too may dread to call themselves my equal, and to paragon themselves with me.

"So spake he. And Peleides was filled with grief; and his heart within his shaggy bosom was cut in twain with thought, whether to draw his sharp sword from his thigh, and, breaking through the heroes, kill the king, or to stay his anger and refrain his soul. While thus he raged within his heart and mind, and from its scabbard was in act to draw the mighty sword, came Athene from heaven; for Here, white-armed goddess, sent her forth, loving both heroes in her soul, and caring for them. She stood behind, and took Peleides by the yellow hair, seen by him only, but of the rest none saw her. Achilles marvelled, and turned back; and suddenly he knew Pallas Athene, and awful seemed her eyes to him; and, speaking winged words, he thus addressed her:—

"Why, daughter of ægis-bearing Zeus, art thou come hither? Say, is it to behold the violence of Agamemnon, Atreus' son? But I will tell to thee what verily I think shall be accomplished, that by his own pride he soon shall slay his soul.

"Him then the grey-eyed goddess Athene bespake:—

"I came to stay thy might, if thou wilt hear me, from Heaven; for Here, white-armed goddess, sent me forth, loving you both alike, and caring for you. But come, give up strife, nor draw thy sword! But, lo, I bid thee taunt him with sharp words, as verily shall be. For this I say to thee, and it shall be accomplished: the time shall come when thou shalt have thrice-fold as many splendid gifts, because of his violence. Only restrain thyself; obey me.

"To her, in turn, spake swift-footed Achilles:—

"Needs must I, goddess, keep thy word and hers, though sorely grieved in soul; for thus is it best. He who obeys the gods, him have they listened to in time of need.

"He spake, and on the silver handle pressed a heavy hand, and back into the sdabbard thrust the mighty sword, nor swerved from Athene's counsel. But she back to Olympus fared, to the house of ægis-bearing Zeus unto the other gods.

"Then Peleides again with bitter words bespake Atrides, and not yet awhile surceased from wrath:—

"Wine-weighted, with a dog's eyes and a heart of deer! Never hadst thou spirit to harness thee for the battle with the folk, nor yet to join the ambush with the best of the Achaians. *This* to thee seems certain death. Far better is it, verily, throughout the broad camp of Achaians to filch gifts when a man stands up to speak against thee—thou folk-consuming king, that swayest men of nought. Lo, of a sooth, Atrides, now for the last time wilt thou have dealt knavishly. But I declare unto thee, and will swear thereon a mighty oath; yea, by this sceptre, which shall never put forth leaf nor twig since that day that it left the stock upon the mountains, nor again shall bud or bloom, for of its leafage and its bark the iron

stripped it bare ; and sons of the Achaians hold it in their palms for judgment, they who guard the laws by ordinance of Zeus ; and this shall be to thee a mighty oath. Verily, and of a truth, the day shall be when sore desire for Achilles shall come upon Achaians one and all. Then shalt thou, though grieved in soul, have no power to help, while in multitudes they fall and die at Hector's murderous hands ; but thou shalt tear thy heart within thy breast for rage, seeing thou honouredst not the best of the Achaians aught.

"So spake Peleides ; and on the earth cast down the sceptre studded with nails of gold ; and he sat down upon his seat."

What is chiefly noticeable in this passage is the grand scale upon which the anger of Achilles is displayed. He is not content with taunting Agamemnon, but he includes all the princes in his scorn :

δημοβόρος βασιλεύς, ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις.

We may also notice the interference of Athene. The Athene of the *Iliad* is a different goddess from the Athene of the Parthenon. In strength she is more than a match for Ares : her cunning she subordinates to great and masculine ends, not to the arts of beauty or to study. She is the saint of the valiant and wary soldier. While checking Achilles, she does not advise him to avoid strife in any meek and gentle spirit. She simply reminds him that, if he gets to blows with Agamemnon, he will put himself in the wrong ; whereas, by contenting himself with sharp words and with secession from the war, he will reduce the haughty king to sue him with gifts and submission. Athene in this place acts like all the other deities in Homer when they come into direct contact with the heroes. She is exterior to Achilles, and at the same time a part of his soul. She is the expression of both thought and passion deeply seated in his nature, the force of his own character developed by circumstance, the god within his breast externalised and rendered visible to him alone. What Athene is to the son of Peleus, Ate is to Agamemnon.

The next passage in which Achilles appears in the fore'ront

of the scene is in the Ninth Book (307–429). Worn out with the losses of the war, Agamemnon has at last humbled his pride, and sent the wisest of the chiefs, silver-tongued Odysseus, and Phœnix, the old guardian of the son of Peleus, to beg Achilles to receive back Briseis, and to take great gifts if only he will relax his wrath. But Achilles remains inflexible. In order to maintain the firmness of his character, to justify the righteousness of his indignation, Homer cannot suffer him to abandon his resentment at the first entreaty. Some more potent influence must break his resolution than the mere offer to restore Briseis. Homer has the death of Patroclus in the background. He means to show the iron heart of Peleides at last softened by his sorrow and his love. Therefore, for the time, he must protract the situation in which Achilles is still haughty, still implacable toward his repentant injurer. In this interview with the ambassadors we have to observe how confident Achilles abides in the justice of his cause and in his own prowess. It is he with his valiant bands who has sacked the Trojan cities; it is he who kept Hector from the ships; and now in his absence the Achaians have had to build a wall in self-defence. And for whom has he done this? For the sons of Atreus and for Helen. And what has he received as guerdon? Nothing but dishonour. These arguments might seem to savour too much of egotism and want of feeling for the dangers of the host. But at the end come those great lines upon the vanity of gifts and possessions in comparison with life, and upon the doom which hangs above the hero:—

"You may make oxen and sheep your prey; you may gather together tripods and the tawny mane of horses; but none can make the soul of man return by theft or craft when once it has escaped. As for me," he resumes, "my goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis, warns me that fate lays two paths to bear me deathward. If I abide and fight before the walls of Troy, my return to Hellas is undone, but fame imperishable remains for me. If I return to my dear country then my good glory dies, but long life awaits me, nor will the term of death be hastened."

This foreknowledge of Achilles that he has to choose between a long, inglorious life, and a swift-coming, but splendid death, illuminates his ultimate action with a fateful radiance. In the passage before us it lends dignity to his obstinate and obdurate endurance. He says: I am sick at heart for the insults thrust on me. I am wounded in my pride. Toiling for others I get no reward. And behold, if I begin to act again, swift death is before me. Shall I, to please Agamemnon, hasten on my own end?

When the moment arrives for Achilles to be aroused from inactivity by his own noblest passion, then, and not till then, does he fling aside the thought of death, and trample on a long reposeful life. He is conscious that his glory can only be achieved by the sacrifice of ease and happiness and life itself; but he holds honour dearer than these good things. Yet at the same time he is not eager to throw away his life for a worthless object, or to buy mere fame by an untimely end. It requires another motive, the strong pressure of sorrow and remorse, to quicken his resolution; but when once quickened nothing can retard it. Achilles at this point might be compared to a mass of ice and snow hanging at the jagged edge of a glacier, suspended on a mountain brow. We have seen such avalanches brooding upon Monte Rosa, or the Jungfrau, beaten by storms, loosened, perchance, by summer sun, but motionless. In a moment a lightning-flash strikes the mass, and it roars crumbling to the deep.

This lightning-flash in the case of Achilles was the death of Patroclus (xviii. 15). Patroclus has gone forth to aid the Achaians and has fallen beneath Hector's sword. Antilochus, sent to bear the news to Achilles, finds him standing before the ships, already anxious about the long delay of his comrade. Antilochus does not break the news gently. His tears betray the import of his message, and he begins:—

"Woe is me, son of brave Peleus! Verily thou shalt hear right sorrowful tidings: Patroclus lies slain; round his corpse they are fighting; stripped it lies, but plumed Hector hath his armour.

"So he spake. But a black cloud of woe covered the hero. With both hands he took the dust of ashes and flung them down upon his head, and disfigured his fair face, and on his fragrant tunic lay the black cinders. But he, huge in his hugeness, stretched upon the dust lay, and with his hands he tore and ravaged his hair."

Thus Achilles receives the first shock of grief. When his mother rises from the sea to comfort him, he refuses consolation, and cries:—

"My mother, the Olympian hath done all these things; but of what pleasure is this to me, now that my dear friend is dead, Patroclus, whom above all my comrades I honoured, even as myself? Him have I slain!"

This is the pith and marrow of his anguish. I slew Patroclus: it was I who sent him forth to fight. "Now," he resumes a few lines lower down, "Now my soul bids me no longer live or be with men, save only I strike Hector first and slay him with my spear, and make him pay the fine of Patroclus."

Thetis reminds him that, if he slay Hector, his own life will be short. This only serves to turn his anguish into desperate resolve:—

"Straight let me die, seeing I might not come to the aid of my comrade when he was dying. Far from his fatherland he perished. He looked for me that I should have been his helper. But now, since never to my home shall I return, nor was I a light in trouble to Patroclus, nor to my other comrades who are slain by hundreds by the god-like Hector—while I here sit beside the ships, a useless load upon the earth—I who am such as there is none else like me among brazen-coated Achaians in the war—others may be better perchance in council—now let strife perish from among gods and men, with anger which stirs up the prudent even to fury."

Thus he foregoes his wrath, and flings resentment from him like a mantle. Then he rises ready for the fight. "If death come, let death be welcome. Death came to Herakles. In his due time he comes to me. Meanwhile I thirst to make Dardan ladies widows in the land."

When he next appears, his very form and outward semblance are transfigured. He stands alone and unarmed in the trench. A fire surrounds his head and flames upon his curls. His voice thrills the armies like the blare of a victorious trumpet. This is how Homer has described him shouting in the trench (xviii. 203) :—

"But Achilles, dear to Zeus, arose, and around his mighty shoulders Athene cast her tasselled ægis ; and about his head the queenly goddess set a crown of golden mist, and from it she made blaze a dazzling flame. As when smoke rises to the clear sky from a town, afar from an island which foemen beleaguer, who all day long contend in grisly war, issuing from their own town ; but at sundown beacons blaze in rows, and on high the glare goes up, and soars for neighbouring men to see, if haply warders off of woe may come to them with ships—so from the head of Achilles the flame went up to heaven. He stood at the trench, away from the wall, nor joined the Achaians, for he honoured his mother's wise command. There he stood and shouted ; and beside him Pallas Athene cried ; but among the Trojans he raised infinite tumult. As when a mighty voice, when the trumpet shrills for the murderous foemen that surround a town, so was the mighty voice of the son of Æacus. They then, when they heard the brazen cry of Æacides, in the breasts of all of them the heart was troubled ; but the fair-maned horses turned the cars backward ; for in their heart they knew the sorrows that were to be. And the charioteers were stricken when they saw the tireless flame terrible above the head of big-hearted Peleus' son blazing. The grey-eyed goddess Athene kindled it. Thrice above the trench shouted the god-like Achilles in his might : thrice were the Trojans and their noble allies troubled."

From this moment the action of the *Iliad* advances rapidly. Achilles takes his proper place, and occupies the whole stage. The body of Patroclus is brought home to him ; he mourns over it, and promises to bury it, when he shall have slain Hector, and slaughtered twelve sons of the Trojans on the pyre. Then he reconciles himself with Agamemnon, and formally renounces anger. Lastly, when he has put on the divine armour made for him by Hephæstus, he ascends his car, and hastens into the fight. But again at this point, when Achilles is at the very pitch and summit of his glory, the voice of fate is heard. It is with the promise of the tomb that he enters the

battle. Turn to Book xix. 399. Achilles has just mounted his chariot :—

"Fiercely did he cheer the horses of his sire :—Xanthus and Balius, far-famed children of Podargé, take other heed, I warn ye, how to save your master, and to bring him to the Danaan host, returning of war satisfied ; nor leave him, like Patroclus, dead there on the field.

"To him then from beneath the yoke spake the fleet-footed horse Xanthus, and straightway drooped his head ; and all his mane, escaping from the collar by the yoke, fell earthward. Goddess Here, of the white arms, gave him speech :—

"Verily shall we save thee yet this time, fierce Achilles ; but close at hand is thy doom's day. Nor of this are we the cause, but great God in heaven and resistless fate. For neither was it by our sloth or sluggishness that Trojans stripped the arms from Patroclus his shoulders ; but of Gods the best, whom fair-haired Leto bare, slew him among the foremost, and gave to Hector glory of the deed. We, though we should run apace with Zephyr's breath, the fleetest, as 'tis said, yet for thee it is decreed to perish by the might of God and man.

"When he had thus spoken the Erinnyes stayed his voice ; and, high in wrath, fleet-foot Achilles answered him :—

"Xanthus ! why prophesy my death ? Thou hast no call. Right well know I, too, that it is my fate to perish here, far from dear sire and mother ; yet for all this will I not surcease before I satiate the Trojans with war.

"He spoke, and vanward held his steeds with mighty yell."

This dialogue between Achilles and Xanthus is not without great importance. Homer is about to show the hero raging in carnage, exulting over suppliants and slain foes, terrible in his ferocity. It is consistent with the whole character of Achilles, who is fiery, of indomitable fury, that he should act thus. Stung as he is by remorse and by the sorrow for Patroclus, which does not unnerve him, but rather kindles his whole spirit to a flame, we are prepared to see him fierce even to cruelty. But when we know that in the midst of the carnage he is himself moving a dying man, when we remember that he is sending his slain foes like messengers before his face to Hades, when we keep the warning words of Thetis and of Xanthus in our minds, then the grim frenzy of Achilles becomes dignified. The world is

in a manner over for him, and he appears the incarnation of disdainful anger and revengeful love, the conscious scourge of God and instrument of destiny. We need not go through the details of the battle, in which Achilles drives the Trojans before him, and is only withheld by the direct interposition of the gods from carrying Ilium by assault. To borrow a simile from Dante, his foes are like frogs scurrying away from the approach of their great foe, the water-snake. Then follow the episode of Lycaon's slaughter, the fight with the river-gods, and the death of Hector. To the assembled Greeks Achilles cries (xxii. 386) :—

"By the ships, a corpse, unburied, unbewailed, lies Patroclus : but of him I will not be unmindful so long as I abide among the living and my knees have movement. Nay, should there be oblivion of the dead in Hades, yet I even there will remember my loved comrade. But rise, ye youths of Achaia, and singing Pæan, let us hasten to the ships, and take this slain man with us. Great glory have we got. Divine Hector have we slain, to whom the Trojans in their city prayed as to a god."

So the Pæan rings. But Achilles by the ships, after the hateful banquet, as he calls it in the sorrowful loathing of all comfort, has been finished, lays himself to sleep (xxiii. 59) :—

"The son of Peleus, by the shore of the roaring sea lay, heavily groaning, surrounded by his Myrmidons ; on a fair space of sand he lay, where the waves lapped the beach. Then slumber took him, loosing the cares of his heart, and mantling softly around him, for sorely wearied were his radiant limbs with driving Hector on by windy Troy. There to him came the soul of poor Patroclus, in all things like himself, in stature, and in the beauty of his eyes and voice, and on his form was raiment like his own. He stood above the hero's head, and spake to him :—

"Sleepest thou, and me hast thou forgotten, Achilles? Not in my life wert thou neglectful of me, but in death. Bury me soon, that I may pass the gates of Hades. Far off the souls, the shadows of the dead, repel me, nor suffer me to join them on the river bank ; but, as it is, thus I roam around the wide-doored house of Hades. But stretch to me thy hand, I entreat ; for never again shall I return from Hades when once ye shall have given me the meed of funeral fire. Nay, never shall we sit in life apart from our dear comrades, and take counsel together. But me hath hateful fate enveloped—fate that was mine at the moment of my birth. And for thyself, divine Achilles, it is doomed to die beneath the noble Trojans' wall. Another thing I will say to thee, and bid thee do

it if thou wilt obey me :—Lay not my bones apart from thine, Achilles, but lay them together ; for we were brought up together in your house, when Menœtius brought me, a child, from Opus to your house, because of woful bloodshed on the day in which I slew the son of Amphidamas, myself a child, not willing it, but in anger at our games. Then did the horseman, Peleus, take me, and rear me in his house, and cause me to be called thy squire. So then let one grave also hide the bones of both of us, the golden urn thy goddess-mother gave to thee.

"Him answered swift-footed Achilles :—

"Why, dearest and most honoured, hast thou hither come, to lay on me this thy behest? All things most certainly will I perform, and bow to what thou biddest. But stand thou near: even for one moment let us throw our arms upon each other's neck, and take our fill of sorrowful wailing.

"So spake he, and with his outstretched hands he clasped, but could not seize. The spirit, earthward, like smoke, vanished with a shriek. Then all astonished arose Achilles, and beat his palms together, and spoke a piteous word :—

"Heavens ! is there then among the dead soul and the shade of life, but thought is theirs no more at all? For through the night the soul of poor Patroclus stood above my head, wailing and sorrowing loud, and bade me do his will : it was the very semblance of himself.

"So spake he, and in the hearts of all of them he raised desire of lamentation ; and while they were yet mourning, to them appeared rose-fingered dawn about the piteous corpse."

There is surely nothing more thrilling in its pathos throughout the whole range of poetry than this scene, in which the iron-hearted conqueror of Hector holds ineffectual communing in dreams with his dear, lost, never-to-be-forgotten friend. But now the pyre is ready to be heaped, and the obsequies of Patroclus are on the point of being celebrated. Thereupon Achilles cuts his tawny curls, which he wore clustering for Spercheius, and places them in the hand of dead Patroclus. At the sight of this token that Achilles will return no more to Hellas, but that he must die and lie beside his friend, all the people fall to lamentation. Agamemnon has to arouse them to prepare the pyre. A hundred feet each way is it built up ; oxen and sheep are slaughtered and placed upon the wood, with jars of honey and olive oil. Horses, too, and dogs are slain to serve

the dead man on his journey; and twelve sons of the great-souled Trojans are sacrificed to the disconsolate ghost. Then Achilles cast fire upon the wood, and wailed, and called on his loved friend by name:—

"Hail, Patroclus! I greet thee even in the tomb: for now I am performing all that erst I promised. Twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans with thee the fire devours; but Hector, son of Priam, I will give to no fire to feed on, but to dogs."

Meanwhile the pyre of Patroclus refused to burn, and Achilles summoned the two winds, Boreas and Zephyrus, to help him. They at this time were feasting in the house of Zephyrus, and Iris had to fetch them from their cups. They rose and drove the clouds before them, and furrowed up the sea, and passed to fertile Troy, and fell upon the pyre, and the great flame crackled, hugely blazing:

"All night they around the pyre together cast a flame, blowing with shrill breath, and all night swift Achilles, from a golden bowl, holding a double goblet, drew wine, and poured it on the ground, and soaked the earth, calling upon the soul of poor Patroclus. As when a father wails who burns the bones of his son unwed, so wailed Achilles, burning his friend's bones, pacing slowly round the fire, and uttering groan on groan.

"But when the star of dawn came to herald light upon the earth, whom following morn, with saffron robe, spread across the sea, then the pyre languished and the flame was stayed.

"The winds again went homeward, back across the Thracian deep. It groaned beneath them, raging with the billow's swell. But the son of Peleus turned from the pyre, and lay down weary, and sweet sleep came upon him."

After this manner was the burning of Patroclus. And here the action of the *Iliad* may be said to end. What follows in the last two books is, however, of the greatest importance in adding dignity to the character of Achilles, and in producing that sense of repose, that pacification of the more violent emotions, which we require in the highest works of tragic art. First come the games around the barrow of Patroclus. Presiding

over them is Achilles, who opens his treasure-house to the combatants with royal generosity, for ever mindful that in honouring them, he is paying honour to the great sad ghost of his dead friend. The bitterness of his sorrow is past; his thirst for vengeance is assuaged. Radiant and tranquil he appears among the chiefs of the Achaians; and to Agamemnon he displays marked courtesy.

But it is not enough to show us Achilles serene in the accomplishment of his last service to Patroclus. As the crowning scene in the whole *Iliad*, Homer has contrived to make us feel that, after all, Achilles is a man. The wrathful and revengeful hero, who bearded Agamemnon on his throne, and who slew the unarmed suppliant Lycaon, relents in pity at a father's prayer. Priam, in the tent of Achilles, presents one of the most touching pictures to be found in poetry. We know the leonine fierceness of Achilles; we know how he has cherished the thought of insult to dead Hector as a final tribute to his friend: even now he is brooding in his lair over the Trojan corpse. Into this lion's den the old king ventures. Instead of springing on him, as we might have feared, Achilles is found sublime in generosity of soul. Begging Patroclus to forgive him for robbing his ghost of this last satisfaction, he relinquishes to Priam the body of his son. Yet herein there is nothing sentimental. Achilles is still the same—swift to anger and haughty—but human withal, and tender-hearted to the tears of an enemy at his mercy.

This is the last mention made of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The hero, whom we have seen so noble in his interview with Priam, was destined within a few days to die before the walls of Troy, slain by the arrow of Paris.* His ashes were mingled with those of Patroclus. In their death they were not divided.

Once again in the Homeric poems does Achilles appear.

* That the poet of the *Iliad* in its present form had this legend before him is clear from Books xxi. 297, xxii. 355–360.

But this time he is a ghost among the pale shadows of Elysium. (*Od.* xi. 466):—

"Thereupon came the soul of Achilles, son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of brave Antilochus, and of Ajax, who was first in form and stature among the Achaians after great Peleides. The soul of fleet Æacides knew me, and wailing, he thus spake:—

"Zeus-born son of Laertes, wily Ulysses, why in thy heart, unhappy man, dost thou design a deed too great for mortals? How darest thou descend to Hades, where dwell the thoughtless dead, the phantoms of men whose life is done?

"So he spake; but I in turn addressed him:—

"Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest by far of Achaians, I am come to learn of Teiresias concerning my return to Ithaca. But none of men in elder days or of those to be, is more blessed than thou art, Achilles; for in life the Argives honoured thee like a god, and now again in thy greatness thou rulest the dead here where thou art. Therefore be not grieved at death, Achilles.

"So spake I, and he straightway made answer:—

"Console not me in death, noble Odysseus! Would rather that I were a bondsman of the glebe, the servant of a master, of some poor man, whose living were but scanty, than thus to be the king of all the nations of the dead."

Some apology may be needed for these numerous quotations from a poem which is hardly less widely known and read than Shakspeare or the Bible. By no other method, however, would it have been possible to bring out into prominence the chief features of the hero whom Homer thought sufficient for the subject of the greatest epic of the world. For us Achilles has yet another interest. He, more than any character of fiction, reflects the qualities of the Greek race in its heroic age. His vices of passion and ungovernable pride, his virtue of splendid human heroism, his free individuality asserted in the scorn of fate, are representative of that Hellas which afterwards, at Marathon and Salamis, was destined to inaugurate a new era of spiritual freedom for mankind. It is impossible for us to sympathise with him wholly, or to admire him otherwise than as we admire a supreme work of art; so far is he removed from our so-called proprieties of moral taste and

feeling. But we can study in him the type of a bygone, infinitely valuable period of the world's life, of that age in which the human spirit was emerging from the confused passions and sordid needs of barbarism into the higher emotions and more refined aspirations of civilisation. Of this dawn, this boyhood of humanity, Achilles is the fierce and fiery hero. He is the ideal of a race not essentially moral or political, of a nation which subordinated morals to art, and politics to personality; and even of that race he idealises the youth rather than the manhood. In some respects Odysseus is a truer representative of the delicate and subtle spirit which survived all changes in the Greeks. But Achilles, far more than Odysseus, is an impersonation of the Hellenic genius, superb in its youthfulness, doomed to immature decay, yet brilliant at every stage of its brief career.

To exaggerate the importance of Achilles in the education of the Greeks, who used the *Iliad* as their Bible, and were keenly sensitive to all artistic influences, would be difficult. He was the incarnation of their chivalry, the fountain of their sense of honour. The full development of this subject would require more space than I can here give to it. It will be enough to touch upon the friendship of Achilles for Patroclus as the central point of Hellenic chivalry; and to advert to the reappearance of his type of character in Alexander at the very moment when the force of Hellas seemed to be exhausted.

Nearly all the historians of Greece have failed to insist upon the fact that fraternity in arms played for the Greek race the same part as the idealisation of women for the knighthood of feudal Europe. Greek mythology and history are full of tales of friendship, which can only be paralleled by the story of David and Jonathan in our Bible. The legends of Herakles and Hylas, of Theseus and Peirithous, of Apollo and Hyacinth, of Orestes and Pylades, occur immediately to the mind. Among the noblest patriots, tyrannicides, lawgivers, and self-

devoted heroes in the early times of Greece, we always find the names of friends and comrades recorded with peculiar honour. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who slew the despot Hipparchus at Athens; Diocles and Philolaus, who gave laws to Thebes; Chariton and Melanippus, who resisted the sway of Phalaris in Sicily; Cratinus and Aristodemus, who devoted their lives to propitiate offended deities when a plague had fallen upon Athens; these comrades, staunch to each other in their love, and elevated by friendship to the pitch of noblest enthusiasm, were among the favourite saints of Greek legendary history. In a word, the chivalry of Hellas found its motive force in friendship rather than in the love of women; and the motive force of all chivalry is a generous, soul-exalting, unselfish passion. The fruit which friendship bore among the Greeks was courage in the face of danger, indifference to life when honour was at stake, patriotic ardour, the love of liberty, and lion-hearted rivalry in battle. "Tyrants," said Plato, "stand in awe of friends."

It may seem at first sight paradoxical to speak at all of Greek chivalry, since this word, by its very etymology, is appropriated to a mediæval institution. Yet when we inquire what chivalry means, we find that it implies a permanent state of personal emotion, which raises human life above the realities of every-day experience, and inspires men with unselfish impulses. Furthermore, this passionate condition of the soul in chivalry is connected with a powerful military enthusiasm, severing the knight from all vile things, impelling him to the achievement of great deeds, and breeding in his soul a self-regardless temper. Both the ancient and the mediæval forms of chivalry included love and arms. The heroes and the knights alike were lovers and warriors. The passion, which Plato called Madness in the *Phædrus*, and which the Provençal Troubadours knew by the name of *Joie*, was excited in the heroes by their friends, and in the knights by their ladies. But the emotion

was substantially the same; nor, with the tale of Patroclus and with the whole of Greek history before us, can we allow our modern inaptitude for devoted friendship to blind us to the seriousness of this passion among the Greeks. Beside war and love, chivalry implies a third enthusiasm. In the case of the Greek heroes this was patriotic. In the case of the mediæval knights it was religious. Thus, antique chivalry may be described as a compound of military, amatory, and patriotic passions meeting in one enthusiastic habit of the soul; mediæval chivalry as a compound of military, amatory, and religious passions meeting in a similar enthusiastic habit of soul. It is hardly necessary to point out the differences between Hellenic heroism and Teutonic knighthood, or to show how far the former failed to influence society as favourably as the latter. The Christian chivalry of mercy, forgiveness, gentleness, and long-suffering, which claims the title of charity in armour, was a post-Hellenic ideal. Greeks could not have comprehended the oath which Arthur imposed upon his knights, and which ran in the following words: "He charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and alway to flee treason, also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asked mercy, and alway to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour upon pain of death." The murder of Lycaon by Achilles, the butchery of Dolon by Diomedes, and the treachery practised upon Philoctetes by Odysseus are sufficiently at variance with the spirit of this oath; nor do any of the heroic legends tell a tale of courtesy towards women. Thus much about the unchivalrous aspects of Greek heroism I have thought it right to say, before returning to the view which I first stated, that military friendship among the Greeks played for Hellenic civilisation a part not wholly dissimilar to that of chivalrous love among the nations of mediæval Europe. Regarded as an institution, with ethics of its own, and with peculiar social and political regulations, this Greek chivalry was

specially Dorian.* Yet it spread through all the states of Hellas. In Athens it allied itself with philosophy, as afterwards at Florence did the chivalry of knighthood; and in Thebes, during the last struggle for Hellenic freedom, it blazed forth in the heroism of the Three Hundred, who fell together face-forward to the Macedonian lances at Chæronea.† Meanwhile, Achilles remained for all Greece the eponym of passionate friendship; and even in the later periods of Greek poetry the most appropriate title for a pair of noble comrades was "Achilleian." Concerning the abuse and debasement of such passion among the historic Greeks this is not the place to speak. Achilles and Patroclus cannot be charged with having sanctioned by example any vice, however much posterity may have read its own moods of thought and feeling into Homer.

Æschylus wrote a tragedy entitled the *Myrmidones*, in commemoration of the love of Achilles; and, perhaps, few things among the lost treasures of Greek literature are so much to be regretted as this play, which would have cast clear light upon the most romantic of Greek legends. It may also be mentioned in passing that we possess fragments of a play of Sophocles which bears the name Ἀχιλλέως ἐρασταί, or *Lovers of Achilles;* but what its subject was, and whether the drama was Satyric, as seems probable, or not, we do not know. The beautiful passage in which love is compared to a piece of glittering ice held in the hand of children, has been preserved from it by Stobæus.

Enough, fortunately, has survived the ruin of time to enable us to conjecture how Æschylus, in the *Myrmidones*, handled the materials afforded him by Homer. The play, as was frequent, took its name from the Chorus, who represented

* See Müller's *Dorians*, vol. ii. pp. 306–313.

† Sections 18 and 19 of Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas* contain the best account of the Sacred Band, and place the Greek chivalrous sentiment in the clearest light.

the contingent of Thessalian warriors led by Peleus' son against Troy. It opened, if we may trust the scholiast to the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, with a reproach uttered by the Chorus against Achilles for his inactivity:—

τάδε μὲν λεύσσεις, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
δοριλυμάντους Δαναῶν μόχθους
οὓς * * εἴσω κλισίας.

"Seest thou these things, glorious Achilles—the sufferings of the Danaans beneath victorious spears? Whom thou within thy tent"—— here the fragment breaks off; but enough has been said to strike the keynote of the tragedy. The next fragment, according to Dindorf's arrangement, formed, probably, part of Achilles' defence.* It is written in Iambics and contains the famous simile of the eagle stricken to death by an arrow fledged with his own feather. Like that eagle, argues the hero, have we Greeks been smitten by our own ill-counsel. After the drama has thus been opened, the first great incident seems to have been the arrival of the embassy of Phœnix at Achilles' tent. One corrupt, but precious fragment, put by Aristophanes as a quotation into the mouth of Euripides in the *Frogs*, indicates the line of argument taken by the ambassadors:—

Φθιῶτ' Ἀχιλεῦ, τί ποτ' ἀνδροδαΐκτον ἀκουὼν
ἰήκοπον οὐ πελάζεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;

Though the Greek as it stands is untranslatable, the meaning is pretty clearly this: Achilles of Phthia, how can you bear to hear of these woes nor lend a helping hand? The next fragment must be received with caution. It occurs in the *Frogs* as a quotation:—

Βέβληκ' Ἀχιλλεὺς δύο κύβω καὶ τέτταρα.
Achilles has cast two dice, and four:

On which the scholiast makes the following remark: "This is from the *Myrmidones;* for the poet feigned them playing dice;

* It may be questioned whether this fragment ought not to be referred to the scene with the embassy later on in the play.

and it is the custom of gamesters to cry thus: two, four, three, five. Dionysus says this to show that Æschylus has won." Another scholiast puts it in doubt whether the verse be taken from the *Telephus* of Euripides or some other source. The foundation is, therefore, too slender to build upon securely; else we might imagine that, after the departure of the ambassadors, and perhaps after the equipment of Patroclus for the war, Achilles was represented by Æschylus as whiling away the time with his companions at a game of hazard. Then enters Antilochus, the messenger of bad news. He recites the death of Patroclus, and lifts up his voice in lamentation. Our next fragment brings the whole scene vividly before us:—

> Ἀντίλοχ', ἀποίμωξόν με τοῦ τεθνηκότος
> τὸν ζῶντα μᾶλλον.

The words are spoken undoubtedly by Achilles: "Antilochus, wail thou for me rather than for the dead—for me who live." It is again from a comedy of Aristophanes, the *Ecclesiazusæ*, that this exclamation comes; and in passing we may remark, that such frequent citations from this single play of Æschylus by a comic poet prove its popularity at Athens. Between the narration of Antilochus and the bringing in of the dead body of Patroclus there must have been a solemn pause in the dramatic action, which Æschylus, no doubt, filled up with one of his great choric passages. Then followed the crowning scene in the tragedy. Achilles, front to front with the corpse of his friend, uttered a lamentation, which the ancients seem to have regarded as the very ecstasy of grief and love and passionate remembrance. Lucian, quoting one of the lines of this lament, introduces it with words that prove the strong impression it produced:—"Achilles, when he bemoaned Patroclus' death, in his unhusbanded passion burst forth into the very truth." To quote and comment upon the three lines which have been preserved from this unique Threnos, would be here impossible. To understand them at all is difficult, and to recompose from them the hero's

speech is beyond our power. The value of the meagre and conflicting citations given by Plutarch, Athenæus, and Lucian, lies in the impression they convey of the deep effect wrought upon Greek sympathy by the passion of the soliloquy. When we call to mind the lamentation uttered by Teucer over the corpse of Ajax in the tragedy of Sophocles, we may imagine how the genius of Æschylus rose to the height of this occasion in his *Myrmidones*. In what way the drama ended is not known. We may, however, hazard a conjecture that the poet did not leave the hero without some outlook into the future, and that the solemn note of reconciliation upon which the tragedy closed responded to the first querulous interrogation of the Chorus at its commencement. The situation was a grand one for working out that purification of the passions which Greek tragedy required. The sullen and selfish wrath of Achilles had brought its bitter consequence of suffering and sorrow for the hero, as well as of disaster for the host. Out of that deadly suffering of Achilles—out of the paroxysm of grief beside the body of his friend—has grown a nobler form of anger, which will bring salvation to his country at a certain loss of his own life. Can we doubt that Æschylus availed himself of this so solemn and sublime a cadence? The dead march and the funeral lamentations for Patroclus mingle with the neighing of war-horses and the braying of the trumpets that shall lead the Myrmidons to war. And over and above all sounds of the grief that is passed and of the triumph that is to follow, is heard the voice of fate pronouncing the death-doom of the hero, on whose ἁμαρτία the tragic movement has depended.

Thus, in the prime of Athens, the poet-warrior of Marathon, the prophet of the highest Hellenic inspiration, handled a legend which was dear to his people, and which to them spoke more, perhaps, than it can do to us. Plato, discussing the *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, remarks in the *Symposium* that the tragic poet was wrong to make Achilles the lover of Patroclus, seeing

that Patroclus was the elder of the two, and that Achilles was the youngest and most beautiful of all the Greeks. The fact, however, is that Homer himself raises no question in our minds about the relations of lover and beloved. Achilles and Patroclus are comrades. Their friendship is equal. It was only the reflective activity of the Greek mind, working upon the Homeric legend by the light of subsequent custom, which introduced these distinctions. The humanity of Homer was purer, larger, and more sane than that of his posterity among the Hellenes. Still, it may be worth while suggesting that Homer, perhaps, intended in Hector and Achilles to contrast domestic love with the love of comrades. The tenderness of Hector for Andromache, side by side with the fierce passion of Achilles, seems to account, at least in some measure, for the preference felt for Hector in the Middle Ages. Achilles controlled the Greek imagination. Hector attracted the sympathies of mediæval chivalry, and took his place upon the list of knightly worthies.* Masculine love was Hellenic. The love of idealised womanhood was romantic. Homer, the sovereign poet, understood both passions of the human heart, delineating the one in Achilles without effeminacy, the other in Hector without sickly sentiment. At the same time, Hector's connection with the destinies of Rome and his appearance in the *Æneid*, if only as a ghost, must not be forgotten when we estimate the reasons why he eclipsed Achilles in the Middle Ages.

It is not till we reach Alexander the Great that we find how truly Achilles was the type of the Greek people, and to what extent he had controlled their growth. Alexander expressed in real life that ideal which in Homer's poetry had been displayed by Achilles. Alexander set himself to imitate Achilles. His tutor, Lysimachus, found favour in the eyes of

* See Caxton's Preface to the *Mort d'Arthur*.

the royal family of Macedon, by comparing Philip to Peleus, his son to Achilles, and himself to Phœnix. On all his expeditions Alexander carried with him a copy of the *Iliad*, calling it "a perfect portable treasure of military virtue." It was in the spirit of the Homeric age that he went forth to conquer Asia. And when he reached the plain of Troy, it was to the tomb of Achilles that he paid special homage. There he poured libations to the mighty ghost, anointed his grave, and, as Plutarch says, "ran naked about his tomb, and crowned it with garlands, declaring how happy he esteemed him in having, while he lived, so faithful a friend, and, when he was dead, so famous a poet to proclaim his actions." We have seen that the two chief passions of Achilles were his anger and his love. In both of these Alexander followed him. The passage just quoted from Plutarch hints at the envy with which Alexander regarded the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus. In his own life he entertained for Hephæstion a like passion. When Hephæstion died of fever at Ecbatana, Alexander exaggerated the fury and the anguish of the son of Peleus. He went forth and slew a whole tribe—the Cosseans—as a sacrifice to the soul of his comrade. He threw down the battlements of neighbouring cities, and forbade all signs of merry-making in his camp. Meanwhile he refused food and comfort, till an oracle from Ammon ordained that divine honours should be paid Hephæstion. Then Alexander raised a pyre, like that of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, except that the pyre of Hephæstion cost 10,000 talents, and was adorned with all the splendour of Greek art in its prime. Here the Homeric ceremonies were performed. Games and races took place; then, like Achilles, having paid this homage to his friend, of bloodshed, costly gifts, and obsequies, Alexander at last rested from his grief. In this extravagance of love for a friend we see the direct working of the *Iliad* on the mind of the Macedonian king. But the realities of life fall far short of the poet's dream. Neither the love nor the sorrow of

Alexander for Hephæstion is so touching as the love and sorrow of Achilles for Patroclus.

In his wrath, again, Alexander imitated and went beyond his model. When he slew Clitus in a drunken brawl, there was no Athene at his side to stay his arm and put the sword back in the scabbard. Yet his remorse was some atonement for his violence. "All that night," says Plutarch, "and the next day he wept bitterly, till, being quite spent with lamenting and exclaiming, he lay, as it were, speechless, only fetching deep sighs." It is noticeable that Alexander, here also like Achilles, conqueror and hero though he was, scorned not to show his tears, and to grovel on the ground in anguish. His fiery temper added indomitable energy to all he did or felt. In a few years he swept Asia, destroying kingdoms, and founding cities that still bear his name; and though his rage betrayed him now and then into insane acts, he, like Achilles, was not wholly without the guidance of Athene. In both we have the spectacle of a gigantic nature moved by passions; yet both are controlled by reason, not so much by the reflective understanding, as by an innate sense of what is great and noble. Alexander was Aristotle's pupil. In his best moments, in his fairest and most solid actions, the spirit of Aristotle's teaching ruled him and attended him, as Achilles was ruled and attended by Pallas. Again, in generosity, Alexander recalls Achilles. His treatment of the wife and daughters of Darius reminds us of the reception of Priam by the son of Peleus. Grote, indeed, points out that good policy prompted him to spare the life of the Persian queen. That may be true; but it would have been quite consistent with the Greek standard of honour to treat her with indignity while he preserved her life. This Alexander refrained from doing. His entertainment of Stateira was not unworthy of a queen; and if he did not exhibit the refined courtesy of the Black Prince, he came as near to this ideal of modern chivalry as a Greek could do. In the last place Alexander, like Achilles,

was always young. Like Achilles, he died young, and exists for us as an immortal youth. This youthfulness is one of the peculiar attributes of a Greek hero, one of the distinguishing features of Greek sculpture—in a word, the special mark of the Greek race. "O Solon! Solon!" said the priest of Egypt, "you Greeks are always boys!" Achilles and Alexander, as Hegel has most eloquently demonstrated, are for ever adolescent. Yet, after all is said, Alexander fell far below his prototype in beauty and sublimity. He was nothing more than a heroic man. Achilles was the creature of a poet's brain, of a nation's mythology. The one was the ideal in its freshness and its freedom. The other was the real, dragged in the mire of the world, and enthralled by the necessities of human life.

It is very difficult, by any process of criticism, to define the impression of greatness and of glory which the character of Achilles leaves upon the mind. There is in him a kind of magnetic fascination, something incommensurable and indescribable, a quality like that which Goethe defined as dæmonic. They are not always the most noble or the most admirable natures which exert this influence over their fellow-creatures. The Emperor Napoleon and our own Byron had each, perhaps, a portion of this Achilleian personality. Men of their stamp sway the soul by their prestige, by their personal beauty and grandeur, by the concentrated intensity of their character, and by the fatality which seems to follow them. To Achilles, to Alexander, to Napoleon, we cannot apply the rules of our morality. It is, therefore, impossible for us, who must aim first at being good citizens, careful in our generation, and subordinate to the laws of society around us, to admire them without a reservation. Yet, after all is said, a great and terrible glory does rest upon their heads; and though our sentiments of propriety may be offended by some of their actions, our sense of what is awful and sublime is satisfied by the contemplation of them. No one should delude us into thinking that

true culture does not come from the impassioned study of everything, however eccentric and at variance with our own mode of life, that is truly great. Greatness, of whatever species it may be, is always elevating and spirit-stirring. When we listen to the Eroica Symphony, and remember that that masterwork of music was produced by the genius of Beethoven, brooding over the thoughts of Achilles in the *Iliad*, and of Napoleon upon the battle-fields of Lombardy, we may feel how abyss cries to abyss, and how all forms of human majesty meet and sustain each other.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMEN OF HOMER.

Helen of Troy—Her Eternal Youth—Variety of Legends connected with her.— Stesichorus.— Helen in the *Iliad*.— Helen in the *Odyssey*.— The Treatment of Helen by Æschylus.— Euripidean Handling of her Romance.—Helen in Greek Art.—Quintus Smyrnæus.—Apollonius of Tyana and the Ghost of Achilles.—Helen in the Faust Legend.— Marlowe and Goethe.— Penelope.— Her Home-love.— Calypso and the Isle of Ogygia.— Circe.— The Homeric and the Modern Circe.— Nausicaa— Her Perfect Girlishness.— Briseis and Andromache.— The Sense of Proportion and of Relative Distance in Homer's Pictures.— Andromache and Astyanax.— The Cult of Heroes and Heroines in Greece.—Artistic Presentation of Homeric Persons.—Philostratus.

> "For first of all the spherèd signs whereby
> Love severs light from darkness, and most high
> In the white front of January there glows
> The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose."
>
> Prelude to *Tristram and Iseult*, lines 91-94.

HELEN OF TROY is one of those ideal creatures of the fancy over which time, space, and circumstance, and moral probability, exert no sway. It would be impossible to conceive of her except as inviolably beautiful and young, in spite of all her wanderings and all she suffered at the hands of Aphrodite and of men. She moves through Greek heroic legend as the desired of all men and the possessed of many. Theseus bore her away while yet a girl from Sparta. Her brethren, Castor and Polydeukes, recover her from Athens by force, and gave to her Æthra, the mother of Theseus, for bondwoman. Then

all the youths of Hellas wooed her in the young world's prime. She was at last assigned in wedlock to Menelaus, by whom she conceived her only earthly child, Hermione. Paris, by aid of Aphrodite, won her love and fled with her to Egypt and to Troy. In Troy she abode more than twenty years, and was the mate of Deiphobus after the death of Paris. When the strife raised for her sake was ended, Menelaus restored her with honour to his home in Lacedæmon. There she received Telemachus and saw her daughter mated to Neoptolemus. But even after death she rested not from the service of love. The great Achilles, who in life had loved her by hearsay, but had never seen her, clasped her among the shades upon the island Leuké and begat Euphorion. Through all these adventures Helen maintains an ideal freshness, a mysterious virginity of soul. She is not touched by the passion she inspires, or by the wreck of empires ruined in her cause. Fate deflowers her not, nor do years impair the magic of her charm. Like beauty, she belongs alike to all and none. She is not judged as wives or mothers are, though she is both; to her belong soul-wounding blossoms of inexorable love, as well as pain-healing poppy-heads of oblivion; all eyes are blinded by the adorable, incomparable grace which Aphrodite sheds around her form.*

Whether Helen was the slave or the beloved of Aphrodite, or whether, as Herodotus hinted, she was herself a kind of Aphrodite, we are hardly told. At one time she appears the willing servant of the goddess; at another she groans beneath her bondage. But always and on all occasions she owes everything to the Cyprian queen. Her very body-gear preserved the powerful charm with which she was invested at her birth. When the Phocians robbed the Delphion treasure-house, the wife of

* I take this occasion of calling attention to the essay on Helen considered as an allegory of Greek Beauty, by Paul de St. Victor in his *Hommes et Dieux*.

one of their captains took and wore Helen's necklace, whereupon she doted on a young Epirot soldier and eloped with him.

Whose daughter was Helen? The oldest legend calls her the child of Leda and of Zeus. We have all read the tale of the Swan who was her father amid the rushes of Eurotas—the tale which Leonardo and Buonarroti and Correggio thought worthy of their loveliest illustration. Another story gives her for the offspring of Oceanus and Tethys, as though, in fact, she were an Aphrodite risen from the waves. In yet a third, Zeus is her sire and Nemesis her mother: and thus the lesson of the tale of Troy was allegorised in Helen's pedigree. She is always god-begotten and divinely fair. Was it possible that anything so exquisite should have endured rough ravishment and borne the travail of the siege of Troy? This doubt possessed the later poets of the legendary age. They spun a myth according to which Helen reached the shore of Egypt on the ship of Paris; but Paris had to leave her there in cedar-scented chambers by the stream of Nile, when he went forth to plough the foam, uncomforted save by her phantom. And for a phantom the Greeks strove with the Trojans on the windy plains of Ilium. For a phantom's sake brave Hector died, and the leonine swiftness of Achilles was tamed, and Zeus bewailed Sarpedon, and Priam's towers were levelled with the ground. Helen, meanwhile—the beautiful, the inviolable—sat all day long among the palm-groves, twining lotus-flowers for her hair, and learning how to weave rare Eastern patterns in the loom. This legend hides a delicate satire upon human strife. For what do men disquiet themselves in warfare to the death, and tossing on sea-waves? Even for a phantom—for the shadow of their desire, the which remains secluded in some unapproachable, far, sacred land. A wide application may thus be given to Augustine's passionate outcry: "Quo vobis adhuc et adhuc ambulare vias difficiles et laboriosas? Non est requies ubi quæritis eam. Quærite quod quæritis; sed ibi non est ubi quæritis. Beatam

vitam quæritis in regione mortis; non est illic." Those who spake ill of Helen suffered. Stesichorus had ventured in the Ἰλίου Πέρσις to lay upon her shoulders all the guilt and suffering of Hellas and of Troy. Whereupon he was smitten with blindness, nor could he recover his sight till he had written the palinode which begins—

οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος,
οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν ναυσὶν ἐυσέλμοις,
οὐδ' ἵκεο πέργαμα Τροίας.*

Even Homer, as Plato hints, knew not that blindness had fallen on him for like reason. To assail Helen with reproach was not less dangerous than to touch the Ark of the Covenant, for with the Greeks beauty was a holy thing. How perfectly beautiful she was, we know from the legend of the cups modelled upon her breasts suspended in the shrine of Aphrodite. When Troy was taken, and the hungry soldiers of Odysseus roamed through the burning palaces of Priam and his sons, their swords fell beneath the vision of her loveliness. She had wrought all the ruin, yet Menelaus could not touch her, when she sailed forth, swanlike, fluttering white raiment, with the imperturbable sweet smile of a goddess on her lips. It remained for a Roman poet to describe her vile and shrinking—

Illa sibi infestos eversa ob Pergama Teucros,
Et pœnas Danaûm et deserti conjugis iras
Permetuens, Troiæ et patriæ communis Erinnys,
Abdiderat sese atque aris invisa sedebat.†

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* "Not true is that tale; nor didst thou journey in benched ships, or come to towers of Troy."

† "She, shrinking from the Trojans' hate,
Made frantic by their city's fate,
Nor dreading less the Danaan sword,
The vengeance of her injured lord:
She, Troy's and Argos' common fiend,
Sat cowering, by the altar screened."—*Conington.*

The morality of these lines belongs to a later age of reflection upon Greek romance. In Homer there are no such epigrams. Between the Helen of the *Iliad*, reverenced by the elders in the Scæan gate, and the Helen of the *Odyssey*, queenlike among her Spartan maidens, there has passed no agony of fear. The shame which she has truly felt has been tempered to a silent sorrow, and she has poured her grief forth beside Andromache over the corpse of Hector.

If we would fain see the ideal beauty of the early Greek imagination in a form of flesh-and-blood reality, we must follow Helen through the Homeric poems. She first appears when Iris summons her to watch the duel of Paris and Menelaus. Husband and lover are to fight beneath the walls of Troy. She, meanwhile, is weaving a purple peplus with the deeds of war done and the woes endured for her sake far and wide :—

> She in a moment round her shoulders flings
> Robe of white lawn, and from the threshold springs,
> Yearning and pale, with many a tender tear.
> Also two women in her train she brings,
> The large-eyed Clymené and Æthra fair,
> And at the western gates right speedily they were.*

English eyes know well how Helen looked as she left her chamber and hastened to the gate; for has not Leighton painted her with just so much of far-off sorrow in her gaze as may become a daughter of the gods? In the gate sat Priam and his elders, and as they looked at Helen no angry curses rose to their lips, but reverential admiration filled them, together with an awful sense of the dread fate attending her :—

> These, seeing Helen at the tower arrive,
> One to another winged words addressed :
> "Well may the Trojans and Achæans strive,
> And a long time bear sorrow and unrest,

* Worsley's *Iliad*, iii. 17. The other quotations are from the same version.

For such a woman, in her cause and quest,
Who like immortal goddesses in face
Appeareth ; yet 'twere even thus far best
In ships to send her back to her own place,
Lest a long curse she leave to us and all our race."

It is thus simply, and by no mythological suggestion of Aphrodite's influence, that Homer describes the spirit of beauty which protected Helen among the people she had brought to sore straits.

Priam accosts her tenderly; not hers the blame that the gods scourge him in his old age with war. Then he bids her sit beside him and name the Greek heroes as they march beneath. She obeys, and points out Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Ajax, describing each as she knew them of old. But for her twin brothers she looks in vain; and the thought of them touches her with the sorrow of her isolation and her shame. In the same book, after Paris has been withdrawn, not without dishonour, from the duel by Aphrodite, Helen is summoned by her liege-mistress to his bed. Helen was standing on the walls, and the goddess, disguised as an old spinning-woman, took her by the skirt, bidding her hie back to her lover, whom she would find in his bedchamber, not as one arrayed for war, but as a fair youth resting haply from the dance. Homer gives no hint that Aphrodite is here the personified wish of Helen's own heart going forth to Paris. On the contrary, the Cyprian queen appears in the interests of the Phrygian youth, whom she would fain see comforted. Under her disguise Helen recognised Aphrodite, the terrible queen, whose bondwoman she was forced to be. For a moment she struggled against her fate. "Art thou come again," she cried, "to bear me to some son of earth beloved of thee, that I may serve his pleasure to my own shame? Nay, rather, put off divinity, and be thyself his odalisque."

With *him* remain,
Him sit with, and from heaven thy feet refrain;
Weep, till his wife he make thee, or fond slave.
I go to him no more, to win new stain,
And scorn of Trojan women again outbrave,
Whelmed even now with grief's illimitable wave.

But go she must. Aphrodite is a hard taskmistress, and the mysterious bond of beauty which chains Helen to her cannot be broken. It is in vain, too, that Helen taunts Paris: he reminds her of the first fruition of their love in the island Cranaë; and at the last she has to lay her down at his side, not uncomplying, conquered as it were by the reflex of the passion she herself excites. It is in the chamber of Paris that Hector finds her. She has vainly striven to send Paris forth to battle; and the sense of her own degradation, condemned to love a man love-worthy only for the beauty of his limbs, overcomes her when she sees the noble Hector clothed in panoply for war. Her passionate outbreak of self-pity and self-reproach is, perhaps, the strongest indication given in the *Iliad* of a moral estimate of Helen's crime. The most consummate art is shown by the poet in thus quickening the conscience of Helen by contact with the nobility of Hector. Like Guinevere, she for a moment seems to say: "Thou art the highest, and most human too!" casting from her as worthless the allurements of the baser love for whose sake she had left her home. In like manner, it was not without the most exquisite artistic intention that Homer made the parting scene between Andromache and Hector follow immediately upon this meeting. For Andromache in the future there remained only sorrow and servitude. Helen was destined to be tossed from man to man, always desirable and always delicate, like the sea-foam that floats upon the crests of waves. But there is no woman who, reading the *Iliad*, would not choose to weep with Andromache in Hector's arms, rather than to smile like Helen in the laps of lovers for whom she little cared. Helen

and Andromache meet together before Hector's corpse, and it is here that we learn to love best what is womanly in Leda's daughter. The mother and the wife have bewailed him in high thrilling threni. Then Helen advances to the bier and cries :

> Hector, of brethren dearest to my heart,
> For I in sooth am Alexander's bride,
> Who brought me hither : would I first had died !
> For 'tis the twentieth year of doom deferred
> Since Troyward from my fatherland I hied ;
> Yet never in those years mine ear hath heard
> From thy most gracious lips one sharp accusing word ;
> Nay, if by other I haply were reviled,
> Brother, or sister fair, or brother's bride,
> Or mother (for the king was alway mild),
> Thou with kind words the same hast pacified,
> With gentle words, and mien like summer-tide.
> Wherefore I mourn for thee and mine own ill,
> Grieving at heart : for in Troy town so wide
> Friend have I none, nor harbourer of goodwill,
> But from my touch all shrink with deadly shuddering chill.

It would have been impossible to enhance more worthily than thus the spirit of courtesy and knightly kindness which was in Hector—qualities, in truth, which, together with his loyalty to Andromache, endeared the champion of the Trojans to chivalry, and placed Hector upon the list of worthies beside King Arthur and Godfrey of Boulogne.

The character of Helen loses much of its charm and becomes more conventional in the *Odyssey*. It is difficult to believe that the poet who put into her lips the last lines of that threnos, could have ventured to display the same woman calm and innocent and queenlike in the home of Menelaus :

> While in his mind he sat revolving this,
> Forth from her fragrant bower came Helen fair,
> Bright as the golden-spindled Artemis.
> Adraste set the couch ; Alcippe there
> The fine-spun carpet spread ; and Phylo bare
> The silver basket which Alcandra gave,

Consort of Polybus, who dwelt whilere
In Thebes of Egypt, whose great houses save
Wealth in their walls, large store, and pomp of treasure brave.

Helen shows her prudence and insight by at once declaring the stranger guest to be Telemachus; busy with housewifely kindness, she prepares for him a comfortable couch at night; nor does she shrink from telling again the tales of Troy, and the craft which helped Odysseus in the Wooden Horse. The blame of her elopement with Paris she throws on Aphrodite, who had carried her across the sea:

Leaving my child an orphan far away,
And couch, and husband who had known no peer,
First in all grace of soul and beauty shining clear.

Such words, no doubt, fell with honey-sweet flattery from the lips of Helen on the ears of Menelaus. Yet how could he forget the grief of his bereavement, the taunts of Achilles and Thersites, and the ten years' toil at Troy endured for her? Perhaps he remembered the promise of Proteus, who had said, "Thee will the immortals send to the Elysian plains and furthest verge of earth; where dwells yellow-haired Rhadamanthus, and where the ways of life are easiest for men; snow falls not there, nor storm, nor any rain, but Ocean ever breathes forth delicate zephyr breezes to gladden men; since thou hast Helen for thine own, and art the son-in-law of Zeus." Such future was full recompense for sorrow in the past. Besides, Helen, as Homer tells, had charms to soothe the soul and drown the memory of the saddest things. Even at this time, when thought is troublesome, she mixes Egyptian nepenthé with the wine—nepenthé "which, whoso drinks thereof when it is mingled in the bowl, begets for him oblivion of all woe; through a whole day he drops no tear adown his cheek, not even should his sire or mother die, nay, should they slay his brother or dear son before his face, and he behold it with his eyes. Such virtuous juices had the child of Zeus, of potent

charm, which Polydamna, wife of Thon, gave to her, the Egyptian woman, where earth yields many medicines, some of weal and some of bane." This nepenthé was the secret of Helen's power. In the fifteenth book of the *Odyssey* we have yet another glimpse of Helen in the palace of Menelaus. She interprets an omen in favour of Odysseus, which had puzzled Menelaus, and gives to Telemachus a costly mantle, star-bright, the weft of her own loom, produced from the very bottom of the chest in which she stored her treasures. The only shadow cast upon Helen in the *Odyssey* is to be found lurking in the ominous name of Megapenthes, Menelaus' son by a slave-woman, who was destined after his sire's death to expel her from fair Lacedæmon. We may remember that it was on the occasion of the spousal of this son to Alector's daughter, and of the sending of Hermione to be the bride of Neoptolemus, that Telemachus first appeared before the eyes of Helen.

The charm of Helen in the Homeric poems is due in a great measure to the *naïveté* of the poet's art. The situations in which she appears are never strained, nor is the ethical feeling, though indicated, suffered to disturb the calm influence of her beauty. This is not the case with Æschylus. Already, as before hinted, Stesichorus in his lyric interludes had ventured to assail the character of Helen, applying to her conduct the moral standard which Homer kept carefully out of sight. Æschylus goes further. His object was to use Hellenic romance as the subject-matter for a series of dramatic studies which should set forth his conception of the divine government of the world. A genius for tragedy which has never been surpassed, was subordinated by him to a sublime philosophy of human life. It was no longer possible for Helen to escape judgment. Her very name supplied the keynote of reproach. Rightly was she called Helen—ἑλέναυς, ἕλανδρος, ἑλέπτολις—'a hell of ships, hell of men, hell of cities,' she sailed forth to Troy, and the heedless Trojans sang marriage songs in her

praise, which soon were turned to songs of mourning for her sake. She, whom they welcomed as "a spirit of unruffled calm, a gentle ornament of wealth, a darter of soft glances, a soul-wounding love-blossom," was found to be no less a source of mischief than is a young lion nurtured in the palace for the ruin of its heirs. Soon had the Trojans reason to revile her as a "Fury bringing woe on wives." The choruses of the *Agamemnon* are weighted with the burden of her sin. "Ἰὼ ἰὼ παῤῥάνους Ἑλένα," it breaks forth: "thine is the blood-guilt of those many many souls slain beneath Troy walls!" She is incarnate Até, the soul-seducing, crime-engendering, woe-begetting curse of two great nations. Zeus, through her sin, wrought ruin for the house of Priam, wanton in its wealth. In the dark came blinded Paris and stole her forth, and she went lightly through her husband's doors, and dared a hateful deed. Menelaus, meanwhile, gazed on the desecrated marriage-bed, and seemed to see her floating through his halls; and the sight of beauteous statues grew distasteful to his eyes, and he yearned for her across the sea in dreams. Nought was left, when morning came, but vain forth-stretchings of eager hands after the shapes that follow on the paths of sleep. Then war awoke, and Ares, who barters the bodies of men for gold, kept sending home to Hellas from Troy a little white dust stored in brazen urns. It is thus that Æschylus places in the foreground, not the witchery of Helen and the charms of Aphrodite, but her lightness and her sin, the woe it wrought for her husband, and the heavy griefs that through her fell on Troy and Hellas. It would be impossible to moralise the consequences of the woman's crime with greater sternness.

Unfortunately we have no means of stating how Sophocles dealt with the romance of Helen. Judging by analogy, however, we may feel sure that in this, as in other instances, he advanced beyond the ethical stand-point of Æschylus, by treating the child of Leda, no longer as an incarnation of

dæmonic Até, but as a woman whose character deserved the most profound analysis. Euripides, as usual, went a step further. The bloom of unconscious innocence had been brushed by Æschylus from the flower of Greek romance. It was impossible for any subsequent dramatist to avoid in some way moralising the character of Helen. The way selected by Euripides was to bring her down to the level of common life. The scene in the *Troades* in which Helen stands up to plead for her life against Hecuba before the angry Menelaus is one of the most complete instances of the Euripidean sophistry. The tragic circumstances of Troy in ruins and of injured husband face to face with guilty wife are all forgotten, while Helen develops a very clever defence of her conduct in a long rhetorical oration. The theatre is turned into a law-court, and forensic eloquence is substituted for dramatic poetry. Hecuba replies with an elaborate description of the lewdness, vanity, and guile of Helen, which we may take to be a fair statement of the poet's own conception of her character, since in the *Orestes* he puts similar charges into the mouth of Agamemnon's daughter. There is no doubt that Hecuba has the best of the argument. She paints the beauty of her son Paris and the barbaric pomp which he displayed at Sparta. Then turning to Helen—

> ὁ σὸς δ' ἰδών νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη κύπρις·
> τὰ μῶρα γὰρ πάντ' ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτη βροτοῖς,
> καὶ τοὔνομ' ὀρθῶς ἀφροσύνης ἄρχει θεᾶς.*

Sententious epigrams like this, by which the myths were philosophised to suit the occasions of daily life, exactly suited the temper of the Athenian audience in the age of Euripides. But Hecuba proceeds: "You played your husband off against your lover, and your lover against your husband, hoping always to keep the one or the other by your artifice; and when Troy fell, no one found you tying the halter or sharpening the knife

* "Thy own soul, gazing at him, became Kupris: for Aphrodite, as her name denotes, is all the folly of mortals."

against your own throat, as any decent woman in your position would have done." At the end of her speech she seems to have convinced Menelaus, who orders the attendants to carry off Helen to the ships in order that she may be taken to Argos and killed there. Hecuba begs him not to embark her on the same boat with himself. "Why?" he asks. "Is she heavier than she used to be?" The answer is significant:

οὐκ ἔστ' ἐραστὴς ὅστις οὐκ ἀεὶ φιλεῖ.

"Once a lover, always a lover." And so it turns out; for, at the opening of the *Orestes*, Helen arrives in comfort at the side of Menelaus. He now is afraid lest she should be seized and stoned by the Argives, whose children had been slain for her sake in Troy. Nor is the fear vain. Orestes and Pylades lay hold of her, and already the knife is at her throat, when Phœbus descends and declares that Helen has been caught up to heaven to reign with her brothers Castor and Polydeukes. A more unethical termination to her adventures can hardly be imagined; for Euripides, following hitherto upon the lines of the Homeric story, has been at great pains to analyse her legend into a common tale of adultery and female fascination. He now suddenly shifts his ground and deifies the woman he has sedulously vilified before. His true feeling about Helen is expressed in the lines spoken by Electra to Clytemnestra (*Electra*, 1062):

τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἶδος αἶνον ἄξιον φέρει
Ἑλένης τε καὶ σοῦ, δύο δ' ἔφυτε συγγόνω,
ἄμφω ματαίω Κάστορός τ' οὐκ ἀξίω.
ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἁρπασθεῖσ' ἑκοῦσ' ἀπώλετο,
σὺ δ' ἄνδρ' ἄριστον Ἑλλάδος διώλεσας.

"You and your sister are a proper pair, and your beauty has brought you the credit you deserve: both are light women and unworthy of Castor; for Helen allowed herself to be ravished and undone, while you killed the best man in Greece." Further illustrations of the Euripidean conception of Helen as a worthless woman, who had the art to reconquer a weak husband's

affection, might be drawn from the tirade of Peleus against Menelaus in the *Andromache* (590, etc.).*

This Euripidean reading of the character of Helen was natural to a sceptical and sophistical age, when the dimly moralised myths of ancient Hellas had become the raw material for a poet's casuistry. Yet, in the heart of the Greek people, Homer had still a deeper, firmer place than even Euripides; and the thought of Helen, ever beautiful and ever young, survived the rude analysis of the Athenian drama. Her romance recovered from the prosaic rationalism to which it had been subjected—thanks, no doubt, to the many sculptors and painters who immortalised her beauty, without suggesting the woes that she had brought upon the world. Those very woes, perhaps, may have added pathos to her charm: for had not she too suffered in the strife of men? How the artists dealt with the myth of Helen, we only know by scattered hints and fragments. One bas-relief, engraved by Millingen, reveals her standing calm beneath the sword of Menelaus. That sword is lifted, but it will not fall. Beauty, breathed around her like a spell, creates a magic atmosphere through which no steel can pierce. In another bas-relief, from the Campana Museum, she is entering Sparta on a chariot, side by side with Menelaus, not like a captive, but with head erect and haughty mien, and proud hand placed upon the horse's reins. Philostratus, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, describes an exceedingly beautiful young philosopher, whose mother bore a close resemblance to the picture of Helen by Eumelus. If the lineaments of the mother were repeated in the youth, the eyes of Helen in her picture must have been large and voluptuous, her hair curled in clusters, and her teeth of dazzling whiteness. It is probable that the later artists, in their illustrations of the romance of Helen, used the poems of Lesches

* Quite another view of Helen's character is developed in the *Helena*-where Euripides has followed the Stesichorean version of her legend with singular disregard for consistency. Much might be said on this point about the licence in handling mythical material the Attic dramatists allowed themselves.

and Arctinus, now lost, but of which the *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnæus preserve to us a feeble reflection. This poet of the fourth century after Christ does all in his power to rehabilitate the character of Helen by laying the fault of her crime on Paris, and by describing at length the charm which Venus shed around her sacred person. It was only by thus insisting upon the dæmonic influence which controlled the fate of Helen, that the conclusions reached by the rationalising process of the dramatists could be avoided. The Cyclic poems thus preserved the heroic character of Helen and her husband at the expense of Aphrodite, while Euripides had said plainly: "What you call Aphrodite is your own lust." Menelaus, in the *Posthomerica*, finds Helen hidden in the palace of Deiphobus; astonishment takes possession of his soul before the shining of her beauty, so that he stands immovable, like a dead tree, which neither north nor south wind shakes. When the Greek heroes leave Troy town, Agamemnon leads Cassandra captive, Neoptolemus is followed by Andromache, and Hecuba weeps torrents of tears in the strong grasp of Odysseus. A crowd of Trojan women fill the air with shrill laments, tearing their tresses and strewing dust upon their heads. Meanwhile, Helen is delayed by no desire to wail or weep; but a comely shame sits on her black eyes and glowing cheeks. Her heart leaps, and her whole form is as lovely as Aphrodite was when the gods discovered her with Ares in the net of Hephæstus. Down to the ships she comes with Menelaus hand in hand; and the people, "gazing on the glory and the winning grace of the faultless woman, were astonished; nor could they dare by whispers or aloud to humble her with insults: but gladly they saw in her a goddess, for she seemed to all what each desired." This is the apotheosis of Helen; and this reading of her romance is far more true to the general current of Greek feeling than that suggested by Euripides. Theocritus, in his exquisite marriage-song of Helen, has not a word to say by hint or innuendo that she will bring a curse upon

her husband. Like dawn is the beauty of her face; like the moon in the heaven of night, or the spring when winter is ended, or like a cypress in the meadow, so is Helen among Spartan maids. When Apollonius of Tyana, the most famous *medium* of antiquity, evoked the spirit of Achilles by the pillar on his barrow in the Troad, the great ghost consented to answer five questions. One of these concerned Helen: Did she really go to Troy? Achilles indignantly repudiated the notion. She remained in Egypt; and this the heroes of Achaia soon knew well; "but we fought for fame and Priam's wealth."

It is curious at the point of transition in the Roman world from Paganism to Christianity to find the name of Helen prominent. Helena, the mother of Constantine, was famous with the early Church as a pilgrim to Jerusalem, where she discovered the true cross, and destroyed the Temple of Venus. For one Helen, East and West had warred together on the plains of Troy. Following the steps of another Helen, West and East now disputed the possession of the Holy Sepulchre. Such historical parallels are, however, little better than puns. It is far more to the purpose to notice how the romance of Helen of Troy, after lying dormant during the Middle Ages, shone forth again in the pregnant myth of Faustus. The final achievement of Faust's magic was to evoke Helen from the dead and hold her as his paramour. To the beauty of Greek art the mediæval spirit stretched forth with yearning and begot the modern world. Marlowe, than whom no poet of the North throbbed more mightily with the passion of the Renaissance, makes his Faust exclaim:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
> Sweet Helen make me immortal with a kiss!
> Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.
> I will be Paris, and, for love of thee,

Instead of Troy shall Wertenberg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumèd crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azured arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.

Marlowe, as was natural, contented himself with an external handling of the Faust legend. Goethe allegorised the whole, and turned the episode of Helen into a parable of modern poetry. When Lynkeus, the warder, is reprimanded for not having duly asked Helen into the feudal castle, he defends himself thus:

Harrend auf des Morgens Wonne,
Oestlich spähend ihren Lauf,
Ging auf einmal mir die Sonne
Wunderbar im Süden auf.

Zog den Blick nach jener Seite,
Statt der Schluchten, statt der Höh'n,
Statt der Erd und Himmelsweite,
Sie, die Einzige, zu spähn.*

The new light that rose upon the Middle Ages came not from the East, but from the South; no longer from Galilee, but from Greece.

Thus, after living her long life in Hellas as the ideal of beauty, unqualified by moral attributes, Helen passed into

* "Eastward was my glance directed,
Watching for the sun's first rays;
In the south—oh, sight of wonder!
Rose the bright orb's sudden blaze.
Thither was my eye attracted;
Vanished bay and mountain height,
Earth and heaven unseen and all things,
All but that enchanted light."—*Anster.*

modern mythology as the ideal of the beauty of the Pagan world. True to her old character, she arrives to us across the waters of oblivion with the cestus of the goddess round her waist, and the divine smile upon her lips. Age has not impaired her charm, nor has she learned the lesson of the Fall. Ever virginal and ever fair, she is still the slave of Aphrodite. In Helen we welcome the indestructible Hellenic spirit.

PENELOPE is the exact opposite to Helen. The central point in her character is intense love of her home, an almost cat-like attachment to the house where she first enjoyed her husband's love, and which is still full of all the things that make her life worth having. Therefore, when at last she thinks that she will have to yield to the suitors and leave it, these words are always on her lips;

δῶμα
κουρίδιον μάλα καλὸν ἐνίπλειον βιότοιο,
τοῦ ποτε μεμνήσεσθαι ὀΐομαι ἔνπερ ὀνείρῳ.*

We can scarcely think of Penelope except in the palace of Ithaca, so firmly has this home-loving instinct been embedded in her by her maker. Were it not that the passion for her home is controlled and determined by a higher and more sacred feeling, this Haushälterischness of Penelope would be prosaic. Not only, however, has Homer made it evident in the *Odyssey* that the love of Ithaca is subordinate in her soul to the love of Odysseus; but a beautiful Greek legend teaches how in girlhood she sacrificed the dearest ties that can bind a woman to her love for the hero who had wooed and won her. Pausanias says that when Odysseus was carrying her upon his chariot forth to his own land, her father Icarius followed in their path and besought her to stay with him. The young man was ready, busked for the long journey. The old man pointed to the hearth she had known from childhood. Penelope

* "The home of my wedded years, exceeding fair, filled with all the goods of life, which even in dreams methinks I shall remember."

between them answered not a word, but covered her face with her veil; this action Odysseus interpreted rightly, and led his bride away, willing to go where he would go, yet unwilling to abandon what she dearly loved. No second Odysseus could cross the woman's path. Among the suitors there was not one like him. Therefore she clung to her house-tree in Ithaca, the olive round which Odysseus had built the nuptial chamber; and none, till he appeared, by force or guile might win her thence. It is precisely this tenacity in the character of Penelope which distinguishes her from Helen, the daughter of adventure and the child of change, to whom migration was no less natural than to the swan that gave her life. Another characteristic of Penelope is her prudence. Having to deal with the uproarious suitors camped in her son's halls, she deceives them with fair words, and promises to choose a husband from their number when she has woven a winding-sheet for Laertes. Three years pass, and the work is still not finished. At last a maiden tells the suitors that every night Penelope undoes by lamplight what she had woven in the daytime. This ruse of the defenceless woman has passed into a proverb, and has become so familiar that we forget, perhaps, how true a parable it is of those who in their weakness do and undo daily what they would fain never do at all, trifling and procrastinating with tyrannous passions which they are unable to expel from the palace of their souls. The prudence of Penelope sometimes assumes a form which reminds us of the heroines of Hebrew story; as when, for example, she spoils the suitors of rich gifts by subtle promises and engagements carefully guarded. Odysseus, seated in disguise near the hall-door, watches her success and secretly approves. The same quality of mind makes her cautious in the reception of the husband she has waited for in widowhood through twenty years. The dog Argus has no doubt. He sees his master through the beggar's rags, and dies of joy. The handmaid Eurycleia is convinced as soon as she has touched

the wound upon the hero's foot and felt the well-remembered scar. Not so Penelope. Though the great bow has been bent and the suitors have been slain, and though Eurycleia comes to tell her the whole truth, the queen has yet the heart to seat herself opposite Odysseus by the fire, and to prove him with cunningly-devised tests. There is something provocative of anger against Penelope in this cross-questioning. But our anger is dissolved in tears, when at last, feeling sure that her husband and none other is there verily before her eyes, she flings her arms around him in that long and close embrace. Homer even in this supreme moment has sustained her character by a trait, which, however delicate, can hardly escape notice. Her lord is weary, and would fain seek the solace of his couch. But he has dropped a hint that still more labours are in store for him. Then Penelope replies that his couch is ready at all times and whensoever he may need; no hurry about that; meanwhile she would like to hear the prophecy of Teiresias. Helen, the bondwoman of Dame Aphrodite, would not have waited thus upon the verge of love's delight, long looked for with strained widow's eyes. Yet it would be unfair to Penelope to dwell only on this prudent and somewhat frigid aspect of her character. She is, perhaps, most amiable when she descends among the suitors and prays Phemius to cease from singing of the heroes who returned from Troy. It is more than she can bear to sit weaving in the silent chamber mid her damsels, listening to the shrill sound of the lyre and hearing how other men have reached their homes, while on the waves Odysseus still wanders, and none knows whether he be alive or dead. It may be noticed that just as Helen is a mate meet for easily-persuaded Menelaus and luxurious Paris, so Penelope matches the temper of the astute, enduring, persevering Odysseus. As a creature of the fancy she is far less fascinating than Helen; and this the poet seems to have felt, for side by side with Penelope in the *Odyssey* he has placed

the attractive forms of Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa. The gain is double; not only are the hearers of the romance gladdened by the contrast of these graceful women with the somewhat elegiac figure of Penelope, but the character of Odysseus for constancy is greatly enchanced. How fervent must the love of home have been in the man who could quit Calypso, after seven years' sojourn, for the sake of a wife grown grey with twenty widowed years! Odysseus tells Calypso to her face that she is far fairer than his wife: *

οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς
πάντα μάλ', οὕνεκα σεῖο περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
εἶδος ἀκιδνοτέρη, μέγεθός τ', εἰς ὅμμα ἰδέσθαι.

"As far as looks go, Penelope is nothing beside thee." But what Odysseus leaves unsaid—the grace of the first woman who possessed his soul—constrains him with a deeper, tenderer power than any of Calypso's charms. Penelope, meanwhile, is pleading that her beauty in the absence of her lord has perished: †

ξεῖν' ἦτοι μὲν ἐμὴν ἀρετὴν εἶδός τε δέμας τε
ὤλεσαν ἀθάνατοι ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰσανέβαινον
Ἀργεῖοι.

These two meet at last together, he after his long wanderings, and she having suffered the insistance of the suitors in her palace; and this is the pathos of the *Odyssey*. The woman, in spite of her withered youth and tearful years of widowhood, is still expectant of her lord. He, unconquered by the pleasures cast across his path, unterrified by all the dangers he endures, clings in thought to the bride whom he led forth, a blushing maiden, from her father's halls. O just, subtle, and mighty Homer! There is nothing of Greek here more than of Hebrew, or of Latin, or of German. It is pure humanity.

* "I know well that Penelope is inferior to thee, in form and stature, to the eyes of men."

† "Of a truth my goodliness and beauty of person the gods destroyed what time the Argives went up into Troy town."

Calypso is not a woman, but a goddess. She feeds upon ambrosia and nectar, while her maidens spread before Odysseus the food of mortals. Between her and Hermes there is recognition at first sight; for god knows god, however far apart their paths may lie. Yet the love that Calypso bears Odysseus brings this daughter of Atlas down to earth; and we may reckon her among the women of Homer. How mysterious, as the Greek genius apprehended mystery, is her cavern, hidden far away in the isle Ogygia, with the grove of forest-trees before it and the thick vine flourishing around its mouth. Meadows of snowflake and close-flowering selinus gird it round; and on the branches brood all kinds of birds. It is an island such as the Italian painters bring before us in their rarest moments of artistic divination, where the blue-green of the twilight mingles with the green-blue sea, and the overarching verdure of deep empurpled forest-shade. Under those trees, gazing across the ocean, in the still light of the evening star, Odysseus wept for his far-distant home. Then, heavy at heart, he gathered up his raiment, and clomb into Calypso's bed at night: *

ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἥνδανε νύμφῃ.
ἀλλ' ἦτοι νύκτας μὲν ἰαύεσκεν καὶ ἀνάγκῃ
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ.

To him the message of Hermes recalling him to labour on the waves was joy. But to the nymph herself it brought mere bitterness: "Hard are ye, gods, and envious above all, who grudge that goddesses should couch thus openly with mortal men, if one should make a dear bedfellow for herself. For so the rosy-fingered morning chose Orion, till ye gods that lead an easy life grew jealous, and in Ogygia him the golden-throned maid Artemis slew with her kind arrows." This wail of the immortal nymph Calypso for her roving spouse of seven short years has a strange pathos in it. It seems to pass across the

* "For the nymph pleased him no longer. Nathless, as need was, he slept the night in hollow caverns, beside her loving him who loved her not."

sea like a sigh of winds awakened, none knows how, in summer midnight, that swells and dies far off upon moon-silvered waves. The clear human activity of Odysseus cuts the everlasting calm of Calypso like a knife, shredding the veil that hides her from the eyes of mortals; then he fares onward to resume the toils of real existence in a land whereof she nothing knows. There is a fragment of his last speech to Penelope, which sounds like an echo of Calypso's lamentation. "Death," he says, "shall some day rise for me, tranquil from the tranquil deep, and I shall die in delicate old age." We seem to feel that in his last trance Odysseus might have heard the far-off divine sweet voice of Calypso calling him and have hastened to her cry.

Circe is by no means so mysterious as Calypso. Yet she belongs to one of the most interesting families in Greek romance: her mother was Perse, daughter of Oceanus; her father was Helios; she is own sister, therefore, to the Colchian Æetes, and aunt of the redoubtable Medea. She lives in the isle of Ææa, not, like Calypso, deep embowered in groves, but in a fair open valley sweeping downward to the sea, whence her hearth-smoke may be clearly descried. Nor is her home an ivy-curtained cavern of the rocks, but a house well built of polished stone, protected from the sea-winds by oak-woods. Here she dwells in grand style, with nymphs of the streams and forests to attend upon her, and herds of wild beasts, human-hearted, roaming through her park. Odysseus always speaks of her with respect as *πότνια Κίρκη . . . . δῖα θεάων . . . . Κίρκη ἐϋπλόκαμος δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα.* Like Calypso, she has a fair shrill voice that goes across the waters, and as her fingers ply the shuttle, she keeps singing through the summer air. By virtue of her birthright, as a daughter of the sun, she understands the properties of plant and drug. Poppy and henbane and mandragora, all herbs of subtle juice that draw soul-quelling poison from the fat earth and the burning sun, are hers to use as she thinks fit. And the use she makes of them is malicious;

for, fairy-like and wanton, she will have the men who visit her across the seas, submit their reason to her lure. Therefore she turns them to swine; and the lions and wolves of the mountain she tames in like manner, so that they fawn and curl their long tails and have no heart to ravin any more. This is how she treats the comrades of Odysseus: "She drew them in and set them on benches and on chairs, and put before them cheese and meat and yellow honey, mixing therewith Pramnian wine: but with the food she mingled baleful drugs, to make them quite forget their fatherland. But when she had given them thereof and they had drunk, straightway she smote them with a rod and shut them up in styes. Of swine they had the head, the voice, the form, the bristles; but their mind stayed firm as it had been before. So they then were penned up, weeping bitter tears; but Circe threw before them acorns of the oak and ilex and cornel-berries, food that the forest-ranging swine are wont to eat." What is admirable in this description is its gravity. Circe is not made out particularly wicked or malignant. She is acting only, after her kind, like some beautiful but baleful plant—a wreath, for instance, of red briony berries, whereof if children eat, they perish. Nor, again, is there a touch of the burlesque in the narration. Therefore, in the charming picture which Rivière has painted of Circe, we trace a vein of modern feeling. Clasping her knees with girlish glee, she sits upon the ground beneath a tangle of wild vine, and watches the clumsy hogs that tumble with half-comic, half-pathetic humanity expressed in their pink eyes and grunting snouts before her. So, too, the solemn picture by Burne Jones, a masterpiece of colouring, adds something mediæval to the Homeric Circe. The tall sunflowers that remind us of her father, the cringing panthers, black and lithe, the bending figure of the saffron-vested witch, the jars of potent juices, and the distant glimpse of sea and shore, suggest more of malignant intention than belongs to the πότνια Κίρκη, the Κίρκη πολυφάρμακος of Homer's tale. It was

inevitable that modern art should infuse a deeper meaning into the allegory. The world has lived long and suffered much and grown greatly since the age of Homer. We cannot be so *naïf* and childlike any longer. Yet the true charm of Circe in the *Odyssey*, the spirit that distinguishes her from Tannhaüser's Venus and Orlando's Fata Morgana and Ruggiero's Alcina and Tancred's Armida, lies just in this, that the poet has passed so lightly over all the dark and perilous places of his subject. This delicacy of touch can never be regained by art. It belonged to the conditions of the first Hellenic bloom of fancy, to suggest without insistance and to realise without emphasis. Impatient readers may complain of want of depth and character: they would fain see the Circe of the *Odyssey* as strongly moralised at the Medea of Euripides. But in Homer only what is human attains to real intensity. The marvellous falls off and shades away into soft air-tints and delightful dreams. Still, it requires the interposition of the gods to save Odysseus from the charms of the malicious maid. As Hermes came to Priam on the path between Troy town and the Achaian ships, so now he meets the hero: *

νεηνίῃ ἀνδρὶ ἐοικὼς
πρῶτον ὑπηνήτῃ· τοῦπερ χαριεστάτη ἥβη.

A plant of moly is in his hand; and this will be the antidote to Circe's philtre. Odysseus' sword and strong will must do the rest. When Circe has once found her match, we are astonished at the *bonhomie* which she displays. The game is over: there remains nothing but graceful hospitality on her part—elegant banquets, delicious baths, soft beds, the restoration of the ship's crew to their proper shape, and a store of useful advice for the future. "There all the days, for a whole year, we sat feasting and drinking honeyed wine; but when the year was full, and the seasons had gone round, moon waning

* "Like to a young man when his beard has just begun to grow, whose bloom is then most lovely."

after moon, and the long days were finished, my dear comrades called on me by name, and spake once more of home."

One more female figure from the *Odyssey* remains as yet untouched; and this is the most beautiful of all. Nausicaa has no legendary charm; she is neither mystic goddess nor weird woman, nor is hers the dignity of wifehood. She is simply the most perfect maiden, the purest, freshest, lightest-hearted girl of Greek romance. Odysseus passes straight from the solitary island of Ogygia, where elm and poplar and cypress overshadow Calypso's cavern, into the company of this real woman. It is like coming from a land of dreams into a dewy garden when the sun has risen: the waves through which he has fared upon his raft have wrought for him, as it were, a rough re-incarnation into the realities of human life. For the sea brine is the source of vigour; and into the deep he has cast, together with Calypso's raiment, all memory of her.

Nausicaa was asleep in her Phæacian chamber when Athene, mindful of Odysseus' need, came down and warned her in a dream that she should bestir herself, and wash her clothes against her marriage day. When the damsel woke, she went straight to her father, Alcinous, and begged him to provide a horse and mules. Like a prudent girl, she said nothing of her marriage, but spoke of the cares of the household. Her five brothers, she said, the two wedded and the other three in the bloom of youth, want shining raiment for the dance, and her duty it is to see that the clothes are always ready. Alcinous knew in his heart what she really meant, but he answered her with no unseemly jest. Only he promised a cart and a pair of mules; and her mother gave her food to eat, and wine in a skin, and a golden cruse of oil, that she and her maidens might spend a pleasant morning by the sea-beach, and bathe and anoint themselves when their clothes-washing was finished.

A prettier picture cannot be conceived than that drawn by Homer of Nausicaa, with her handmaidens thronging together

in the cart, which jogs downward through the olive-gardens to the sea. The princess holds the whip and drives; and when she reaches the stream's mouth by the beach, she loosens the mules from the shafts, and turns them out to graze in the deep meadow. Then the clothes are washed, and the luncheon is taken from the basket, and the game of ball begins. How the ball flew aside and fell into the water, and how the shrill cries of the damsels woke Odysseus from his sleep, everyone remembers. The girls are fluttered by the sight of the great naked man, rugged with brine and bruised with shipwreck. Nausicaa alone, as becomes a princess, stands her ground and questions him. The simple delicacy with which this situation is treated, makes the whole episode one of the most charming in Homer. Nothing can be prettier than the change from pity to admiration, expressed by the damsel, when Odysseus has bathed in running water and rubbed himself with oil and put on goodly raiment given him by the girls. Pallas sheds treble grace upon his form, and makes his hair to fall in clusters like hyacinth-blossoms, so that an artist who moulds figures of gilt silver could not shape a comelier statue. The princess, with yesternight's dream still in her soul, wishes he would stay and be her husband. The girlish simplicity of Nausicaa is all the more attractive because the Phæacians are the most luxurious race described by Homer. The palace in which she dwells with her father is all of bronze and silver and gold; it shines like the sun, and a blue line marks the brazen cornice of the walls. Dogs of silver and gold, Hephæstus' work, which never can grow old through length of days, protect the entrance. Richly-woven robes are cast upon the couches in the hall, and light is shed upon the banquet-tables from blazing torches in the hands of golden boys. Outside the palace grows the garden, with well-divided orchard-rows, where pears and figs and pomegranates and burnished apples and olives flourish all year long. The seasons change not in Phæacian land for winter or for

summer. The west wind is always blowing. Pear follows after pear, and apple after apple, and grape bunch after grape bunch, in a never-ending autumn dance. Vintage, too, is there; and there are the trim flower-beds; and through the garden flow two fountains. The whole pleasure-ground seems to have been laid out with geometrical Greek taste. It is a Paradise of neatness, sunbright, clear to take in at a glance. In this delightful palace dwells Alcinous, a kind old man, among his sons; and much delight they take in dance and song and games of strength. The young men, whose beards are but just growing, leap in rhythmic movement to the flute; the elder and more muscular run or wrestle, and much contempt do these goodly fellows, like English lads, reserve for men who are not athletes. Odysseus has to rebuke one of them, Euryalus, by reminding him that faultlessly fair bodies are not always the temples of a godlike soul. Zeus gives not all of his good gifts to all; for some men owe grace and favour to eloquence, others to beauty, and a man may be like to the immortals in face and form, and yet a fool. Alcinous well describes the temper of his people when he says: "We are not faultless boxers, nor yet wrestlers but with our feet we race swiftly, and none can beat us in rowing; and we aye love the banquet, and the lyre, and dancing, and gay raiment, and warm baths, and joys of love." It is therefore not without propriety that Demodocus, their blind bard, "whom the Muse loved much, and gave him good and evil; for she reft him of his sight and gave him honeyed song," sings of Aphrodite tangled with Ares in the net of Hephæstus. From this soft, luxurious, comely, pleasure-loving folk Nausicaa springs up like a pure blossom—anemone or lily of the mountains. She has all the sweetness of temper which distinguishes Alcinous; but the voluptuous living of her people has not spoiled her. The maidenly reserve which she displays in her first reception of Odysseus, her prudent avoidance of being seen with him in the streets of the town while he is yet a stranger,

and the care she takes that he shall suffer nothing by not coming with her to the palace, complete the portrait of a girl who is as free from coquetry as she is from prudishness. Perhaps she strikes our fancy with most clearness when, after bathing and dressing, Odysseus passes her on his way through the hall to the banquet. She leaned against the pillar of the roof and gazed upon Odysseus, and said: "Hail, guest, and be thou mindful of me when perchance thou art in thine own land again, for to me the first thou dost owe the price of life." This is the last word spoken by Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*. She is not mentioned among the Phæacians who took leave of the hero the day he passed to Ithaca.

Before quitting the women of Homer, we must return to the *Iliad;* for without Briseis and Andromache their company would be incomplete. As the figures in a bas-relief are variously wrought, some projecting like independent statues in sharp light and shadow, while others are but half detached, and a third sort offer mere outlined profiles scarcely embossed upon the marble background; even so the poet has obeyed a law of relative proportion in his treatment of character. The subordinate heroes, for example, in the *Iliad* fall away from the central figure of Achilles into more or less of slightness. This does not mean that we can trace the least indecision in Homer's touch, or that he has slurred his work by haste or incapacity. On the contrary, there is no poet from whom deeper lessons in the art of subordinating accessories to the main subject without impairing their real value can be learned. A sculptor like Pheidias knows how to give significance to the least indication of a form which he has placed upon the second plane in his bas-relief. Just so Homer inspires his minor characters with personality. To detach this personality in each case is the task of the critic; yet his labour is no light one; for the Homeric characters draw their life from incidents, motives, action. To the singer's fancy they appeared, not as

products of the self-conscious imagination, but as living creatures; and to separate them from their environment of circumstance is almost to destroy them. This is the specific beauty of the art of Homer. In its origin it must have been the outcome, not of reflection, but of inspired instinct; for in the Homeric age psychological analysis was unknown, and the very nomenclature of criticism had yet to be invented. We can draw inexhaustible lessons in practical wisdom from the Homeric poems; but we cannot with impunity subject those delicate creations to the critical crucible. They delight both intellect and senses with a many-toned harmony of exquisitely modulated parts; but the instant we begin to dissect and theorise, we run a risk of attributing far more method and deliberation than was natural to a poet in the early age of Hellas. It is almost impossible to set forth the persons of Homer except in his own way, and in close connection with the incidents through which they are revealed; whereas the characters of a more self-conscious artist—the Medea, for example, or the Phædra of Euripides—can be described without much repetition of their speeches or reconstruction of the dramas in which they play their parts.

Andromache offers a not inapt illustration to these remarks. She is beautiful, as all heroic women are; and Homer tells us she is "white-armed." We know no more about her person than this; and her character is exhibited only in the famous parting scene and in the two lamentations which she pours forth for her husband. Yet who has read the *Iliad* without carrying away a distinct conception of this, the most lovable among the women of Homer? She owes her character far less to what she does and what she says, than to how she looks in that ideal picture painted on our memory by Homer's verse. The affection of Hector for his wife, no less distinguished than the passion of Achilles for his friend has made the Trojan prince rather than his Greek rival the hero of modern romance.

When he leaves Ilion to enter on the long combat which ends in the death of Patroclus, the last thought of Hector is for Andromache. He finds her, not in their home, but on the wall, attended by her nurse, who carries in her arms his only son: *

Ἑκτορίδην ἀγαπητὸν ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ.

Her first words, after she has wept and clasped him, are: "Love, thy stout heart will be thy death; nor hast thou pity of thy child or me, who soon shall be a widow. My father and my mother and my brothers are all slain: but, Hector, thou art father to me and mother and brother, and thou too art the husband of my youth. Have pity, then, and stay here in the tower, lest thy son be orphaned and thy wife a widow." The answer is worthy of the hero. "Full well," he says, "know I that Troy will fall, and I foresee the sorrow of my brethren and the king: but for these I grieve not: to think of thee, a slave in Argos, unmans me almost: yet even so I will not flinch or shirk the fight. My duty calls, and I must away." He stretches out his mailed arms to Astyanax: but the child is frightened by his nodding plumes. So he lays aside his helmet, and takes the baby to his breast, and prays for him. Andromache smiles through her tears, and down the clanging causeway strides the prince. Poor Andromache has nothing left to do but to return home and raise the dirge for a husband as good as dead. When we see her again in the 22d *Iliad*, she is weaving, and her damsels are heating a bath against Hector's return from the fight. Then suddenly the cry of Hecuba's anguish thrills her ears. Shuttle and thread drop from her hands; she gathers up her skirts, and like a Mænad flies forth to the wall. She arrives in time to see her husband's body dragged through dust at Achilles' chariot-wheels away from Troy. She faints, and when she wakes, it is to utter the most piteous lament in Homer—not, however, for Hector so much,

* "Hector's only son, like unto a fair star."

or for herself, as for Astyanax. He who was reared upon a father's knees and fed with marrow and the fat of lambs, and when play tired him, slept in soft beds among nursing-women, will now roam, an orphan, wronged and unbefriended, hunted from the company of happier men, or fed by charity with scanty scraps. The picture of an orphan's misery among cold friends and hard oppressors is wrought with the pathos of exquisite simplicity. And to the same theme Andromache returns in the *vocero* which she pours forth over the body of Hector. "I shall be a widow and a slave, and Astyanax will either be slaughtered by Greek soldiers or set to base service in like bondage." Then the sight of the corpse reminds her that the last words of her sorrow must be paid to Hector himself. What touches her most deeply is the thought of death in battle: *

> *οὐ γάρ μοι θνήσκων λεχέων ἐκ χεῖρας ὄρεξας·*
> *οὐδέ τί μοι εἶπες πυκινὸν ἔπος, οὔτέ κεν αἰεὶ*
> *μεμνήμην νύκτας τε καὶ ἤματα δακρυχέουσα.*

As far as studied delineation of character goes, Briseis is still more a silhouette than Andromache. We know her as the fair-cheeked damsel who was fain to stay with Achilles, and who loved Patroclus because he kept for her a soothing word. In her threnos for Patroclus she exclaims, "How one woe after another takes me! I saw my husband slain before our city, and my three brethren; but you, Patroclus, then comforted me, and said I should be Achilles' wife: you were ever gentle." This is really all we know about her. Yet Briseis lives in our memory by virtue of the great passions gathered round her, and the weighty actions in which she plays her part.

In course of years the heroes of the Homeric romances came to be worshipped, not exactly like gods with *θυσίαι*, but

* "For, dying, thou didst not reach to me thy hand from the bed, nor say to me words of wisdom, the which I might have aye remembered night and day with tears."

like the more than mortal dead with ἐναγίσματα. They had their chapels and their hearths, distinct from the temples and the altars of the deities. These were generally raised upon the supposed spot of their sepulture, or in places which owed them special reverence as œkists or as ancestors. In the case of Œdipus, the translation of the hero to the company of gods secured for him a cultus in Colonos. It was supposed that heroes exercised a kindly influence over the people among whom they dwelt; haunting the neighbourhood in semi-corporeal visitations, conferring benefits upon the folk, and exhibiting signs of anger when neglected. Thus Philostratus remarks that Protesilaus had a fane in Thessaly, "and many humane and favourable dealings doth he show the men of Thessaly; yea, and angerly also if he be neglected."* The same Philostratus, whose works are a treasure-house of information respecting the latest forms of Helenic Paganism, reports the actual form of prayer used by Apollonius of Tyana at the tomb of Palamedes,† and makes the ghost of Achilles complain: "The Thessalians for a long time have remitted my offerings; still I am not yet minded to display my wrath against them." Achilles, who has been evoked above his tomb in the Troad by the prayers of Apollonius, proceeds to remark that even the Trojans revere him more than his own people, but that he cannot restore the town of Troy to its old prosperity. He hints, however, pretty broadly, that if the Thessalians do not pay him more attention, he will reduce them to the same state of misery as the Trojans. The dæmon, it may be said in passing, vanishes, like a mediæval ghost, at cockcrow.‡

This cultus of the Homeric heroes was, of course, inseparable from a corresponding growth of artistic associations: and here it is not a little curious to compare our own indefinite

* Ἡρωικός, 680. † *Life of Apollonius*, 150. ‡ *Ibid.*, 153, 154.

conceptions of the outward form of the heroic personages with the very concrete incarnation they received from Greek sculptors and painters. The first memorable attempt to express the heroes of Homer in marble was upon the pediment at Ægina; the first elaborate pictorial representation was that of Polygnotus on the walls of the *Lesche* at Delphi. A Greek *Lesche* was not unlike an Italian or Oriental café, extended to suffice for the requirements of a whole city. What has been discovered at Pompeii, in addition to the full description of the Delphian *Lesche* by Pausanias, inclines us to believe that the walls of these public places of resort were not unfrequently decorated with Homeric pictures. The beautiful frescoes of Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes, of Achilles bathed by Thetis in the Styx, of Briseis led forth by Patroclus into the company of the Achaian chiefs, and of Penelope questioning the disguised Odysseus about her husband, which have been discovered in various parts of Pompeii, sufficiently illustrate to modern minds the style of this wall-painting. The treatise surnamed Εἰκόνες of Philostratus is an elaborate critical catalogue of a picture-gallery of this sort; and from many indications contained in it we learn how thoroughly the heroes of Homer had acquired a fixed corporeal personality. In describing, for example, a picture of the lamentation for Antilochus, he says: "These things are Homer's paintings, but the painter's action." Then he goes on to point out the chief persons: "You can distinguish Odysseus at once by his severe and wideawake appearance, Menelaus by his gentleness, Agamemnon by his inspired look; while Tydeus is indicated by his freedom, the Telamonian Ajax by his grimness, and the Locrian by his activity."* In another place he tells us that Patroclus was of an olive-pale complexion (μελίχλωρος), with black eyes and rather thick eyebrows; his head was erect

* Εἰκόνες, 820. (By Kayser, Zurich, 2d ed.)

upon the neck, like that of a man who excels in athletic exercises, his nose straight, with wide nostrils, like an eager horse. These descriptions occur in the *Heroic Dialogue*. They are supposed to have been communicated by the dæmon, Protesilaus, to a vine-dresser who frequented his tomb. Achilles, on the other hand, had abundant hair, more pleasant to the sight in hue than gold, with a nose inclining to the aquiline, angry brows, and eyes so bright and lively that the soul seemed leaping from them in fire. Hector, again, had a terrible look about him, and scorned to dress his hair; and his ears were crushed, not indeed by wrestling, for barbarians do not wrestle, but by the habit of struggling for mastery with wild bulls.*

Some of the women of Homeric story, Helen for example, and Iphigenia, received divine honours, together with suitable artistic personification. But women were not closely connected with the genealogical and gentile foundations of the Greek cultus; only a few, therefore, were thus distinguished. What has here been said about the superstition that gave form and distinctness to the creatures of Homeric fancy, may be taken as applying in general to the attitude assumed by ancient art. The persons of a poem or a mythus were not subjected to critical analysis as we dissect the characters of *Hamlet* or of *Faust*. But they were not on that account the less vividly apprehended. They tended more and more to become external realities—beings with a definite form and a fixed character. In a word, through sculpture, painting, and superstition, they underwent the same personifying process as the saints of mediæval Italy. To what extent the Attic drama exercised a disturbing influence and interrupted this process has been touched upon with reference to the Euripidean Helen.

* Ἡρωϊκός, 736, 733, 722. For the curious detail about Hector's ears, compare Theocr. 22, 45, where athletes are described τεθλαγμένοι οὔατα πυγμαῖς. Statues of Hercules show this.

CHAPTER IV.

HESIOD.

The Difference between the Homeric and the Hesiodic Spirit.—The Personality of Hesiod more distinct than that of Homer.—What we know about his Life.—Perses.—The Hesiodic Rhapsodes.—*Theogony* and *Works and Days*.—Didactic Poetry.—The Story of Prometheus.—Greek and Hebrew Myths of the Fall.—The Allegorical Element in the Promethean Legend.—The Titans.—The Canto of the Four Ages.—Hesiodic Ethics.—The Golden Age.—Flaxman's Illustrations.—Justice and Virtue.—Labour.—Bourgeois Tone of Hesiod.—Marriage and Women.—The Gnomic Importance of Hesiod for the Early Greeks.

HESIOD, though he belongs to the first age of Greek literature, and ranks among the earliest of Hellenic poets, marks the transition from the Heroic period to that of the Despots, when ethical enquiry began in Greece. Like Homer, Hesiod is inspired by the Muses: alone, upon Mount Helicon, he received from them the gift of inspiration. But the message which he communicates to men does not concern the deeds of demigods and warriors. It offers no material for tragedies upon the theme of

> Thebes or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine.

On the contrary, Hesiod introduces us to the domestic life of shepherds, husbandmen, and merchants. Homely precepts for the conduct of affairs and proverbs on the utility of virtue replace the glittering pictures of human passions and heroic strife which the Homeric poems present. A new element is

introduced into literature, the element of man reflecting on himself, questioning the divine laws under which he is obliged to live, and determining the balance of good and evil which the days of youth and age bring with them in his earthly course. The individual is now occupied with his own cares and sorrows and brief joys. Living in the present, and perforce accommodating his imagination to the prose of human existence, he has forgotten to dream any longer of the past, or to reconstruct in fancy the poetic charm of visionary heroism. It was just this difference between Homer and Hesiod which led the aristocratic Greeks of a later age to despise the poet of Ascra. Cleomenes, the king of Sparta, chief of that proud military oligarchy which had controlled the destinies of decaying Hellas, is reported by Plutarch to have said that, while Homer was the bard of warriors and noble men, Hesiod was the singer of the Helots. In this saying the contempt of the martial class for the peaceable workers of the world is forcibly expressed. It is an epigram which endears Hesiod to democratic critics of the modern age. They can trace in its brief utterance the contempt which has been felt in all periods—especially among the historic Greeks, who regarded labour as ignoble, and among the feudal races, with whom martial prowess was the mainstay of society—for the unrecorded and unhonoured earners of the bread whereby the brilliant and the well-born live.

Hesiod, therefore, may be taken as the type and first expression of a spirit in Greek literature alien from that which Homer represents. The wrath and love of Achilles, the charm of Helen and the constancy of Penelope, the councils of the gods, the pathos of the death of Hector, the sorrows of King Priam and the labours of Odysseus, are exchanged for dim and doleful ponderings upon the destiny of man, for the shadowy mythus of Prometheus and the vision of the ages ever growing worse as they advance in time. All the rich and

manifold arras-work of suffering and action which the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* display, yield to such sombre meditation as a sad soul in the childhood of the world may pour forth, brooding on its own wrongs and on the woes of men around. The climax of the whole, after the justice of God has been querulously arraigned, and the violence of princes has been appealed against with pitiful vain iteration, is a series of practical rules for daily conduct, and a calendar of simple ethics.

Very little is known about Hesiod himself; nor can the date at which the poems ascribed to him were composed be fixed with any certainty. Something of the same semi-mythical obscurity which surrounds Homer envelops Hesiod. Just as Homer was the eponymous hero of the school of epic poets in Asia Minor and the islands, so Hesiod may be regarded as the titular president of a rival school of poets localised near Mount Helicon in Bœotia. That is to say, it is probable that the Hesiodic, like the Homeric, poems did not emanate from their supposed author, as we read them now; but we may assume that they underwent changes and received additions from followers who imbibed his spirit and attempted to preserve his style. And, further, the poems ascribed to Hesiod became, as years went by, a receptacle for gnomic verses dear to the Greeks. Like the elegies of Theognis, the ethical hexameters of Hesiod were, practically, an anthology of anonymous compositions. Still Hesiod has a more distinct historic personality than Homer. In the first place, the majority of ancient critics regarded him as later in date and more removed from the heroic age. Then again, he speaks in his own person, recording many details of his life, and mentioning his father and his brother. Homer remains for ever lost, like Shakspeare, in the creatures of his own imagination. Instead of the man Homer, we have the Achilles and Odysseus whom he made immortal. Hesiod tells us much about himself. A vein of

personal reflection, a certain tone of peevish melancholy peculiar to the individual, runs through his poems. He is far less the mouthpiece of the heavenly Muse than a man like ourselves, touching his lyre at times with a divine grace, and then again sweeping the chords with a fretfulness that draws some jarring notes.

We learn from the hexameters of Hesiod that he was born at Ascra in Bœotia (*Works and Days*, 640). His father was an emigrant from Æolian Kumé, whence he came to Ascra in search of better fortune, "forsaking not plenty nor yet wealth and happiness, but evil poverty which Zeus gives to men: near Helicon he dwelt in a sorry village, Ascra, bad in winter, rigorous in summer heat, at no time genial." From the exordium of the *Theogony* (line 23) it appears that Hesiod kept sheep upon the slopes of Helicon; for it was there that the Muse descended to visit him, and, after rebuking the shepherds for their idleness and grossness, gave him her sacred laurel-branch and taught him song. On this spot, as he tells us in the *Works and Days* (line 656), he offered the first prize of victory which he obtained at Chalkis. It would seem clear from these passages that poetry had been recognised as an inspiration, cultivated as an art, and encouraged by public contests, long before the date of Hesiod.

Husbandry was despised in Bœotia, and the pastoral poet led a monotonous and depressing life. The great event which changed its even tenor was a lawsuit between himself and his brother Perses concerning the division of their inheritance.* Perses, who was an idle fellow, after spending his own patrimony, tried to get that of Hesiod into his hands, and took his cause before judges whom he bribed. Hesiod was forced to relinquish his property, whereupon he retired from Ascra to Orchomenos. At Orchomenos he probably passed the re-

* *Works and Days*, 219, 261, 637.

mainder of his days. This incident explains why Hesiod dwelt so much upon the subject of justice in his poem of the *Works and Days*, addressed to Perses. Μέγα νήπιε Πέρση he always calls this brother, as though, while heaping the coals of good counsel upon his head, he wished to humble his oppressor by the parade of moral and intellectual superiority. Some of Hesiod's finest passages, his most intense and passionate utterances, are wrung from him by the injustice he had suffered ; so true is the famous saying that poets

"Learn in suffering what they teach in song."

One parable will for the moment serve as a specimen of the poetry which the wrong-dealing of Perses drew from him. "Thus spake the hawk to the nightingale of changeful throat, as he bore her far aloft among the clouds, the prey of his talons: she, poor wretch, wailed piteously in the grip of his crooked claws; but he insultingly addressed her: 'Wretch, why criest thou? Thou art now the prey of one that is the stronger: and thou shalt go whither I choose to take thee, song-bird as thou art. Yea, if I see fit, I will make my supper of thee, or else let thee go. A fool is he who kicks against his betters: of victory is he robbed, and suffers injury as well as insult.'" Hesiod himself is, of course, meant by the nightingale, and the hawk stands for violence triumphing over justice.

In verse and dialect the Hesiodic poems are not dissimilar from the Homeric, which, supposing their date to have been later, proves that the *Iliad* had determined the style and standard of Epic composition, or, supposing a contemporary origin, would show that the Greeks of the so-called heroic age had agreed upon a common literary language. We may refer the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, after the deduction of numerous interpolations, to Hesiod, but only in the same sense and with the same reservation as we assign the *Iliad* and

the *Odyssey* to Homer.* Unlike the heroic epos, they were recited, not to the accompaniment of the cithara, but by the poet standing with a laurel staff, called ῥάβδος or σκῆπτρον, in his hand. Hesiod, at the opening of the *Theogony*, tells us how he had received a staff of this kind from the Muse upon Mount Helicon. Either, then, the laurel ῥάβδος had already been recognised in that part of Greece as the symbol of the poet's office, or else, from the respect which the followers of Hesiod paid to the details of his poem, they adopted it as their badge.

Of the two poems ascribed to Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, the former—though its genuineness as a Hesiodic production seems to have been disputed from a very early period—was perhaps, on the whole, of greater value than the latter to the Greeks. It contained an authorised version of the genealogy of their gods and heroes, an inspired dictionary of mythology, from which to deviate was hazardous. Just as families in England try to prove their Norman descent by an appeal to the Roll of Battle Abbey, so the canon of the *Theogony* decided the claims of god or demigod to rank among celestials. In this sense, Herodotus should be interpreted, when he says that Hesiod joined with Homer in making their Theogonia for the Greeks. But though this poem had thus an unique value for the ancients, it is hardly so interesting in the light of modern criticism as the *Works and Days*. The *Works and Days*, while for all practical purposes we may regard it as contemporaneous with the *Iliad*, marks the transition from the heroic epic to the moral poetry of the succeeding age, and forms the basis of direct ethical philosophy in Hellas. Hesiod is thus not only the mouthpiece of obscure handworkers in the earliest centuries of Greek history, the poet of their daily labours, sufferings, and wrongs, the singer of

* There are probably few scholars who would now venture to maintain confidently that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed by one and the same poet. The name Homer must be used like the *x* of algebra for an unknown power.

their doubts and infantine reflections on the world in which they had to toil; he is also the immediate parent of gnomic verse, and the ancestor of those deep thinkers who speculated in the Attic age upon the mysteries of human life.

The first ten verses of the *Works and Days* are spurious—borrowed, probably, from some Orphic hymn to Zeus, and recognised as not the work of Hesiod by critics as ancient as Pausanias. The poem begins with these words: "Not, as I thought, is there only one kind of strife; but on the earth there are two, the one praiseworthy, the other to be blamed." It has been conjectured that Hesiod is referring to that passage of the *Theogony** in which Eris, daughter of Night, is said to have had no sister. We are, therefore, justified in assuming that much of his mythology is consciously etymological; and this should be borne in mind while dealing with the legend of Prometheus. The strife whereof he speaks in his exordium is what we should now call competition. It rouses the idle man to labour; it stirs up envy in the heart of the poor man, making him eager to possess the advantages of wealth; it sets neighbour against neighbour, craftsman against craftsman, in commendable emulation. Very different, says the poet, is this sort of strife from that which sways the law-courts; and at this point he begins to address his brother Perses, who had litigiously deprived him of his heritage. The form of didactic poetry, as it has since been practised by the followers of Hesiod, was fixed by the appeal to Perses. Empedocles, it will be remembered, addressed his poem on Nature to the physician Pausanias; Lucretius invoked the attention of Memmius, and Virgil that of Mæcenas; the gnomes of Theognis were uttered to the Megarian Cyrnus; Poliziano dedicated his *Silva* to Lorenzo de' Medici, Vida his *Poetics* to the Dauphin, Fracastorio his medical poem to Bembo, and Pope the *Essay on Man* to Bolingbroke. After this preface on competition as the inducement to labour, and on strife as the basis of

* Line 225.

injustice, the poet proceeds to the mythus of Prometheus, which is so artificially introduced as to justify the opinion that it may be an interpolation by some later craftsman of the Hesiodic school. Work, he says, is necessary for men, because Zeus has concealed and hidden far away our means of livelihood; so that we are forced to toil and suffer in the search for sustenance. This grudge Zeus owed mankind because of the sin of Prometheus. In the *Works and Days* the account given of the trick played upon Zeus is brief: Hesiod only says, "seeing that Prometheus of crooked counsel deceived him." We may, however, supplement the story from the *Theogony*.* In old days the human race had fire, and offered burned sacrifice to heaven; but Prometheus by his craft deceived the gods of their just portion of the victims, making Zeus take the bones and fat for his share. Whereupon Zeus deprived men of the use of fire. Prometheus then stole fire from heaven, and gave it back to men. "Then," says Hesiod, "was cloud-gathering Zeus full wroth of heart, and he devised a great woe for all mankind." He determined to punish the whole race by giving them Pandora. He bade Hephæstus mix earth and water, and infuse into the plastic form a human voice and human powers, and liken it in all points to a heavenly goddess. Athene was told to teach the woman, thus made, household work and skill in weaving. Aphrodite poured upon her head the charm of beauty, with terrible desire, and flesh-consuming thoughts of love. But Zeus commanded Hermes to give to her the mind of a dog and wily temper. After this fashion was the making of Pandora. And when she had been shaped, Athene girded and adorned her; the Graces and divine Persuasion hung golden chains about her flesh, and the Hours crowned her with spring blossoms. Zeus called her Pandora, because each dweller on Olympus had bestowed on her a gift. Then Pandora was sent under the charge of Hermes to Epimetheus, who remem-

* Line 535.

bered not his brother's words, how he had said: "Receive no gift from Zeus, but send it back again, lest evil should befall the race of men." But as soon as Epimetheus had housed her, he recognised his error. Before this time men had lived upon the earth apart from evils, apart from painful toil, and weariful diseases which bring death on mortals. The woman with her hands lifted the lid of the great jar where all these bad things were shut up, and let them loose into the air. Hope alone remained behind—for the lot of humanity is hopeless; but a hundred thousand woes abode at large to plague the race of men. Earth is full of them; the sea is full; and sickness roams abroad by night and day, where it listeth, bearing ills to mortals in silence, for Zeus in his deep craft took away its voice that men might have no warning. Thus not in any way is it possible to avoid the will of God.

Such is the mythus of the Fall, as imagined by the early Greeks. Man in rebellion against heaven, pitted in his weakness at a game of mutual deception against almighty force, is beaten and is punished. Woman, the instrument of his chastisement, is thrust upon him by offended and malignant deity; the folly of man receives her, and repents too late. Both his wisdom and his foolishness conspire to man's undoing—wisdom which he cannot use aright, and foolishness which makes him fall into the trap prepared for him. We are irresistibly led to compare this legend with the Hebrew tradition of the Fall. In both there is an act of transgression on the part of man. Woman in both brings woe into the world. That is to say, the conscience of the Greeks and Jews, intent on solving the mystery of pain and death, convicted them alike of sin; while the social prejudices of both races made them throw the blame upon the weaker but more fascinating sex, by whom they felt their sterner nature softened and their passions quickened to work foolishness. So far the two myths have strong points of agreement. But in that of the Greeks there is no Mani-

cheism. The sin of Prometheus is not, like the sin of Adam, the error of weak human beings tempted by the power of evil to transgress the law of good. It is rather a knavish trick played off upon the sire of gods and men by a wily gamester; and herein it seems to symbolise that tendency to overreach, which formed a marked characteristic of the Hellenes in all ages. The Greek of Hesiod's time conceived of the relations between man and god as involving mutual mistrust and guile; his ideal of intellectual superiority both in Prometheus and in Zeus implied capacity for getting the upper hand by craft. Again, the Greek god takes a diabolical revenge, punishing the whole human race, with laughter on his lips and self-congratulation for superior cunning in his heart. We lack the solemn moment when God calls Adam at the close of day, and tells him of the curse, but also promises a Saviour. The legend of Prometheus has, for its part also, the prophecy of a redeemer; but the redeemer of men from the anger of God does not proceed from the mercy of the deity himself, who has been wronged, but from the iron will of Fate, who stands above both god and man, and from the invincible fortitude of the soul which first had sinned, now stiffening itself against the might of Zeus, refusing his promises, rejecting his offers of reconciliation, biding in pain and patience till Herakles appears and cuts the Gordian knot. This is the spectacle presented by Æschylus in his *Prometheus Bound*. To deny its grandeur would be ridiculous; to contend that it offers some features of sublimity superior to anything contained in the Hebrew legend, would be no difficult task. In the person of Prometheus, chained on Caucasus, pierced by fiery arrows in the noonday and by frosty arrows in the night, humanity wavers not, but endures with scorn and patience and stoical acceptance. Unfortunately the outlines of this great tragic allegory have been blurred by time and travestied by feeble copyists. What we know about the tale of Prometheus is but a faint echo of the mythus appre-

hended by the Greeks anterior to Hesiod, and handled afterwards by Æschylus. Enough, however, remains to make it certain that it was the creation of a race profoundly convinced of present injustice in the divine government of the world. If the soul of man is raised by the attribution of stern heroism, God is lowered to the infamy of a tyrant. But neither is the Hebrew legend on its side theologically flawless. Greek and Jew fail alike to offer a satisfactory solution of the origin of evil. While in the Greek mythus Zeus plays with mankind like a cat with a mouse, the Hebrew story does not explain the justice of that omnipotent Being who created man with capacity for error, and exposed him to temptation. The true critique of the second and third chapters of Genesis has been admirably expressed by Omar Khayyam in the following stanzas:—

"O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my fall to sin?

"O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man
Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and take!"

Both tales are but crude and early attempts to set forth the primitive mystery of conscience, and to account for the prevalence of pain and death. The æsthetic superiority of the Hebrew conception lies in its idealisation of the deity at all costs. God is at least grand and consistent, justified by his own august counsels; and at the very moment of punishing his creatures, He promises deliverance through their own seed. Moreover, a vast antagonistic agency of evil is brought into the field to account for the fall of man; and we are not precluded from even extending our compassion to the deity, who has been thwarted in his schemes for good.

Before quitting the discussion of this ancient tale of human

suffering and sin, it would be well to notice that Hesiod identifies Prometheus with the human race. His hero is the son of the Titan Iapetus by Clymene, daughter of the Titan Oceanus; and his brethren are Atlas, Menoitios, and Epimetheus. These names are significant. Just as Prometheus signifies the forecasting reason of humanity,* so Epimetheus indicates the overhasty judgment foredoomed to be wise too late. These are intellectual qualities. Atlas, in like manner, typifies the endurance of man, who bears all to the very end, and holds upon his back the bulk of heaven. In Menoitios is shadowed forth the insolence and rebellious spirit for which a penalty of pain and death is meted. These, then, are moral qualities. In the children of Iapetus and Clymene we consequently trace the first rude attempt at psychological analysis. The scientific import of the mythus was never wholly forgotten by the Greeks. Pindar calls Prophasis, or excuse, the daughter of Epimetheus, or back-thought as opposed to fore-thought. Plato makes the folly of Epimetheus to have consisted in his giving away the natural powers of self-preservation to the beasts; whereupon Prometheus was driven to supplement with fire the unprotected impotence of man. Lucian, again, says of Epimetheus that repentance is his business; while Synesius adds that he provides not for the future, but deplores the past. The Titans, it should further be remarked, are demiurgic powers—elemental forces of air, fire, earth, water—conditions of existence implied by space and time—distributors of darkness and of light—parents, lastly, of the human race. Though some later Greek authors identified Prometheus with the Titans, and made him the benefactor of humanity, this was not the conception of Hesiod. Prometheus is stated, both in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, to have been the son of Titans, the protagonist of men, who strove in vain to cope with

* That Prometheus was *Pramanthas*, the fire-lighting stick, has been ascertained by modern philology, but was not known by Hesiod.

Zeus. Zeus himself belongs in like manner to a secondary order of existences. Begotten by the Titan Cronos, he seems to typify the reason as distinguished from the brute powers of the universe, mind emergent from matter, and overcoming it by contest. Prometheus is connected, by his parentage, with the old material order of the world; but he represents that portion of it which is human, and which, *quà* human, has affinity to Zeus. Herein we trace the mystery of the divine in man, though man has been placed in antagonism to the deity. The same notion is further symbolised by the theft of fire, and by the fiction of Prometheus breathing a particle of the divine spirit into the clay figures whereof he made men. In the decaying age of Greek mythology this aspect of the legend absorbed attention to the exclusion of the elder Hesiodic romance, as students of Horace will remember, and as appears abundantly from Græco-Roman bas-reliefs. To reconcile man and Zeus, cognate in their origin, yet hostile owing to their ancient feud, it was needful that a deliverer, Herakles, should be born of god and woman, of Zeus and Alcmene, who sets free the elementary principle of humanity typified in Prometheus, and for the first time establishes a harmony between the children of earth and the dwellers on Olympus. So far I have remained within the limits of the Hesiodic legend, only hinting at such divergences as were adopted by the later handlers of the tale. The new aspect given to the whole myth by Æschylus deserves separate consideration in connection with the tragedy of *Prometheus*. It is to be regretted that we only possess so important a relique of Greek religious speculation in fragments; and these fragments are so tantalisingly incomplete that it is impossible to say exactly how much may be the *débris* of original tradition, or where the free fancy of later poets has been remoulding and recasting the material of the antique myth to suit more modern allegory.

The tale of Prometheus may be called the first canto of the

Works and Days. The second consists of the vision of the four ages of man. Hesiod, in common with all early poets, imagined a state of primæval bliss, which he called the Age of Gold. Then Cronos reigned upon the earth, and men lived without care or pain or old age. Their death was like the coming on of sleep, and the soil bore them fruits untilled. When this race came to an end, Zeus made them genii of good-will, haunting the world and protecting mortals. Theirs it is to watch the decrees of justice, and to mark wrong-doing, wrapped around with mist, going up and down upon the earth, the givers of wealth; such is the royal honour which is theirs. The next age he calls the silver, for it was inferior to the first; and Zeus speedily swept it away, seeing that the men of this generation waxed insolent, and paid no honour to the gods. The third age is the brazen. A terrible and mighty brood of men possessed the land, who delighted in nought but violence and warfare. They first ate flesh. Their houses and their armour and their mattocks were of brass. In strife they slew themselves, and perished without a name. After them came the heroes of romance, whom Zeus made most just and worthy. They fell fighting before seven-gated Thebes and Troy; but after death Father Zeus transferred them to the utmost limits of the world, where they live without care in islands of the blest, by ocean waves, blest heroes, for whom thrice yearly the soil bears blooming fruitage honey-sweet. Then cries Hesiod, and the cry is wrenched from him with agony, Would that I had never been born in the fifth generation of men, but rather that I had died before or had lived afterwards; for now the age is of iron! On the face of the world there is nought but violence and wrong; division is set between father and son, brother and brother, friend and friend; there is no fear of God, no sense of justice, no fidelity, no truth; the better man is subject to the worse, and jealousy corrupts the world. Soon, very soon, will wing their way to heaven again—

leaving the earth with her broad ways, robed in white raiment, joining the immortal choir, deserting men—both modest shame and righteous indignation. But dismal woes will stay and harbour here, and against evil there shall be no aid. This ends the second canto of the *Works and Days*, and brings us down to the two hundredth line of the poem. The remainder consists for the most part of precepts adapted to the doleful state in which mortals of the present have to suffer.

What may be called the third canto is occupied with justice, the advantages of which, from a purely utilitarian point of view, as well as æsthetically conceived, are urged in verse. It begins with the apologue of the hawk and nightingale already quoted. Then the condition of a city where justice is honoured, where the people multiply in peace, and there is fulness and prosperity, where pestilence and calamity keep far away, is contrasted with the plagues, wars, famines, wasting away of population, and perpetual discomforts that beset the unjust nation. For the innocent and righteous folk, says the poet, the earth bears plenty, and in the mountains the oak-tree at the top yields acorns, and in the middle bees, and the woolly sheep are weighed down with their fleeces. The women give birth to children like their fathers. With blessings do men always flourish, nor need they tempt the sea in ships, but earth abundantly supplies their wants.

It is worth while to pause for a moment and contemplate the pastoral ideal of perfect happiness and pure simplicity which, first set forth by Hesiod in these passages, found afterwards an echo in Plato, in Empedocles, in Lucretius, in Virgil, in Poliziano, and in Tasso; all of whom have lingered lovingly upon the *bell' età dell' oro*. The Hesiodic conception of felicity is neither stirring nor heroic. Like the early Christian notion of heaven, expressed by the pathetic iteration of *in pace* on the sepulchral tablets of the Catacombs, it owes its beauty to a sense of contrast between tranquillity imagined and woe

and warfare actually experienced. We comprehend why the Spartan king called Hesiod the poet of the Helots, when, in the age that idealised Achilles and Odysseus, the all-daring, all-affronting heroes of a radiant romance, we find that his sole aspiration was to live in peace, decorously fulfilling social duties, and growing old in the routine of moderate labour. It is a commonplace, and what the French would call a *bourgeois*, aspiration. Just this lot in life Achilles rejected with disdain, in exchange for the dazzling prospect of victory and death, that fascinated the noblest of the Greeks, and produced their Alexander. Still we must remember that Hesiod was not, like Homer, singing in the halls of fiery and high-fed chieftains, who stood above the laws. His plaintive note was uttered to the watchers of the seasons and the tillers of the soil, whose very livelihood depended on the will and pleasure of δωροφάγοι βασιλῆς. In the semi-barbarous state of society which Homer and Hesiod represent from different points of view, when violence prevails, and when life and property alike are insecure, justice may well be selected as the prime of virtues, and peace be idealised as heaven on earth. In one sense, as the Greek philosophers argued, justice does include all the excellences of a social being. The man who is perfectly just will be unimpeachable in all his conduct; and the simpler the state of society, the more outrageous the wrongs inflicted by one man on another, the more apparent will this be.

Putting aside, however, for further consideration, the ethical aspect of Hesiod's ideal, we find in it an exquisite and permanently attractive æsthetic beauty. Compared with the fierce heroism of Achilles, the calm happiness of Hesiod's pastoral folk soothes our fancy, like the rising of the moon in twilight above harvest sheaves at the end of a long intolerable day. Therefore great poets and artists, through all the resonant and gorgeous ages of the world, have turned their eyes with sympathy and yearning to these lines; and the best that either Virgil or

Poliziano could achieve, was to catch an echo of Hesiod's melody, to reproduce a portion of his charm. Perhaps the most complete homage to the poetry of Hesiod on this point has been rendered by Flaxman. Nature, so prodigal to the English race in men of genius untutored, singular, and solitary, has given us but few seers who, in the quality of prolific invention, can be compared with Flaxman. For pure conceptive faculty, controlled by unerring sense of beauty, we have to think of Pheidias or Raphael before we find his equal. His powers were often employed on uncongenial subjects; nor had he, perhaps, a true notion of the limitations of his art; else he would not have attempted to give sculpturesque form even in outline to many scenes from the *Divine Comedy*. The conditions, again, of modern life were adverse to his working out his thought in marble, and precluded him from gaining a complete mastery over the material of sculpture. It may also be conceded that, to a large extent, his imagination, like a parasite flower, was obliged to bloom upon the branches of Greek art. What Flaxman would have been without the bas-reliefs, the vases, and the hand-mirrors of the ancients, it is difficult to conceive. Herein, however, he did no more than obey the law which has constrained the greatest modern minds by indissoluble bondage to the service of the Greek spirit. Allowing for all this, the fact remains that within a certain circle, the radius of which exceeds the farthest reach of many far more frequently belauded artists, Flaxman was supreme. Whatever could be expressed according to the laws of bas-relief, embossed in metal, or hewn out of stone, or indicated in pure outline, he conveyed with a truth to nature, a grace of feeling, and an originality of conception, absolutely incomparable. Moreover, in this kind his genius was inexhaustible. Nowhere are the fruits of this creative skill so charming as in the illustrations of the *Works and Days*. The ninth plate, in which the Age of Gold is symbolised by a mother stretching out her infant to receive his father's kiss, might be

selected as a perfect idyll, conveyed within the strictest and severest bounds of sculptural relief. The man and his girl-wife are beautiful and young: age, we feel, will never touch them by whitening her forehead or spoiling his smooth chin with hair. Both are naked, seated on the ground; their outstretched arms enfold as in a living cradle the robust and laughing boy. On one side shoots a heavy sheaf of barley; on the other stands an altar, smoking with bloodless offerings to heaven; above, the strong vine hangs its clusters and its wealth of lusty leaves. More elaborate, but scarcely more beautiful—like a double rose beside a wilding blossom from the hedge of June—is the seventeenth plate, which sets forth the felicity of godfearing folk who honour justice. These, too, are seated on the ground, young men and girls, with comely children, pledges of their joy: one child is suckled at her mother's breast; another lies folded in his father's arms; a girl and boy are kissing on their parents' knees; while a beardless youth pipes ditties on the double reed. Above the group vine-branches flourish, and the veiled Hours, givers of all goodly things, weave choric dance with song, scattering from their immortal fingers flowers upon the men beneath. In order to comprehend the purity of Flaxman's inspiration, the deep and inborn sympathy that made him in this nineteenth century a Greek, we ought to compare these illustrations with the picture of the Golden Age by Ingres. For perfection of scientific drawing from the nude, this masterpiece of the great French painter has never been excelled. It is a treasure-house of varied attitude and rhythmically-studied line. Yet the whole resembles a theatrical *tableau vivant*, which an enlightened choreograph, in combination with an enterprising manager, might design to represent the Garden of Eden on a grand scale. The power displayed by Flaxman is of a very different order. There is no effort, no *mise en scène*, no parade of science, no suggestion of voluptuousness. His outlines are as simple and as pure as Hesiod's verse. We feel that, whereas Ingres is using the old vision as a schema

for the exhibition of his skill, Flaxman has felt its poetry and given form to its imagination. This is not the occasion to linger over these illustrations; yet, before closing the volume that contains them, I cannot forbear from turning a page, and pointing to the pictures of the Pleiads. Seven beautiful interwoven female shapes are rising in the one plate, like a wreath of light or vapour moulded into human form, above the reapers; in the other are descending, with equal grace of now inverted movement, over the ploughman at his toil. By no other artist's hand have the constellations elsewhere been converted, with so much feeling for their form, into the melodies of rhythmically moving human shapes. Flaxman's outlines of the Pleiads might be described as a new celestial imagery, a hitherto unapprehended astronomical mythology.

Continuing what I have called the third canto of the *Works and Days*, Hesiod addresses himself in the next place to the Basileis, or judges of the people: "Kings in judgment, do ye also ponder this divine justice; for the immortals, dwelling near and among men, behold who waste their fellows by wrong judgment, scorning the wrath of God. Verily, upon earth are thrice ten thousand immortals of the host of Zeus, guardians of mortal man. They watch both justice and injustice, robed in mist, roaming abroad upon the earth." Again he reminds them that Justice, virgin child of Zeus, is ever ready with ear open to observe the injury to right and fair dealing done against her honour. She complains of the wrongful judge; but it is the people who suffer for his sin. Therefore let the princes so greedy of bribes take heed, forego their crooked sentences, and bear in mind that the man who works evil for another, works it for himself, that bad intentions harm those who have conceived them, and that Zeus sees all and knows all. This period is concluded with a bitterly ironical repudiation of the poet's own precepts—May neither I nor my son be just; for now the wrongful man has by far the best of it upon the earth! It will be

observed that Zeus throughout this tirade on justice is a different being from the Zeus in the mythus of Prometheus. The dramatic personage of the legend, whose guile inflicts so much misery on men, has been supplanted by a moral idea personified. It is not that a new mythology has been superinduced upon the old one, or that we are now in the track of esoteric religious teaching: the poet is only expressing his internal certainty that, though fraud and violence prevail on earth, yet somewhere in the eternal and ideal world justice still abides. It is not a little singular, considering his querulous and hopeless tone in other passages, that Hesiod should here assert the cognisance which Zeus takes of unfair dealing, and the continued action of protective and retributive dæmons. We could scarcely find stronger faith in the superiority of justice among the moral writings of the Jews. Furthermore, Hesiod reminds Perses that justice is human, violence bestial, and that in the long run honesty will be found to be the best policy. Then follows the sublimest passage of the whole poem—one of great celebrity among the Greeks, who quoted it, and worked it up in poems, parables, and essays: "Behold, thou mayest choose badness easily, even in heaps; for the path is plain, and she dwells very near. But before excellence the immortal gods have placed toil and labour: afar and steep is the road that leads to her, and rough it is at first; but when you reach the height, then truly is it easy, though so hard before."*

The subject of Justice being now exhausted, Hesiod passes, in the fourth canto of the *Works and Days*, to the eulogy of labour, regarded as the source of all good. The unheroic nature of his life-philosophy is very apparent in this section. He thinks and speaks like a peasant, whose one idea it is to add pence to pence, and to cut a good figure in his parish. A man must work, in order to avoid hunger and grow rich: gods and men hate the idle, who are like drones in the hive:

* *Works and Days*, line 286.

if you work, you will get flocks and herds, and folk will envy you: to grow rich from dishonest gains brings no profit, for they are unlucky: the great aim for a good man is to live a respectable life, to work soberly, to fulfil righteousness, to be punctual in paying homage to the gods—to go to church, in fact—with this end in view, that he may buy the estates of his neighbour, instead of having to sell his own. Such is the bathos of Hesiod's ethical ideal: Do right and abstain from wrong, in order that you may be richer than the tenant of the adjacent farm. Many other precepts of like tenor might be quoted: Call your friend to your banquet, and leave your enemy alone; invite him most who lives nearest, for he will be most useful in time of need; love him who loves you, and cleave to him who cleaves to you; give to him who gives, and give not to him who gives not, for to a giver gifts are given, but to him who gives not no man hath given. Of such sort are the Hesiodic rules of conduct. They reveal the spirit of a prudent clown, the practical and calculating selfishness which the doleful conditions of the early age of Hellenic civilisation intensified. The social life of great political centres, and the patriotism of the Persian war, helped at a later period to raise the Greeks above these low and sordid aims in life. It was only in a century when justice could be bought, and penury meant starving, unheeded or derided, by the roadside, that a poet of Hesiod's temper could write,* Money is a man's soul:

χρήματα γὰρ ψυχὴ πέλεται δείλοισι βροτοισι.

In criticising the Solonian reforms at Athens, we should never forget the dismal picture of Hellenic misery revealed to us by Hesiod.

Thus ends the first part of the *Works and Days*. The

* *Works and Days*, 686. It must here again be repeated that, though it is convenient to talk of Hesiod as a poet and a person, the miscellaneous ethical precepts of the *Works and Days* are derived from a variety of sources.

second half of the poem consists of rules for husbandry. Hesiod goes through the seasons of the year, detailing the operations of the several months, and adorning his homely subject with sober but graceful poetry. It is an elegant farmer's calendar, upon which Virgil founded his *Georgics*, translating into Augustan Latin the rude phrases of the bard of Ascra, and turning all he touched to gold. Scattered among precepts relating to the proper seasons and successions of agricultural labour, are descriptive passages and moral reflections. One picture of winter is so long and elaborate as to justify the notion that it is a separate interpolated poem. The episode upon procrastination (line 408), and the rules for the choice of a wife (line 693), might be selected as offering special topics for comment. The latter passage deserves particular attention; since, if the condition of the working man was wretched in this early age of Greece, far more miserable, may we argue, was that of his helpmate. A man, according to Hesiod, ought to be about thirty when he marries, and his wife about nineteen. He should be very careful, in choosing her, to insure that she will not bring him into contempt among his neighbours; and he must remember that if a good wife be a prize, it is not possible to get a worse plague than a bad one. What his general notion about women was, we gather from the long invective against the female sex in the *Theogony*.* Pandora was the greatest curse imaginable to the human race, for from her sprang women; and now, if a man refrains from marriage, he must endure a wretched old age, and leave his money to indifferent kindred; or if he marries and gets a good wife, curses and blessings are mingled in his lot; if his wife be of the bad sort, his whole life is ruined. So utterly impossible is it to avoid the misery devised for the human race by Zeus.

The whole argument of Hesiod in this passage, taken in

* *Theogony*, 587–612.

connection with his few lines on the choice of a wife in the *Works and Days*, and with his grim silence upon the subject of women as the companions of men, proves that he regarded them as a necessary deduction from the happiness of life—the rift within the lute that spoils its music—the plague invented by the malice of an all-wise god in vengeance for a man's deceit. This appreciation of women is substantially consistent with the curious poem by Simonides of Amorgos; with the treatment of the female sex at Athens; with the opinion of Pindar and Plato that to be a woman-lover as compared with a boy-lover was sensual and vile; with the disdainful silence of Thucydides; with the caricatures of society presented by the comic poets; with the famous epigram of Pericles; with the portrait of Xanthippe; and with the remarkable description of female habits in Lucian's *Amores*. Thus, running through the whole literature of the Greeks, we can trace a vein of contempt for women, which may fairly be indicated as the greatest social blot upon their brilliant but imperfect civilisation. Exceptions can, of course, be found. In the age of the despots women rose into far more importance than they afterwards enjoyed in democratic Athens. At Sparta their right to engross property (severely criticised by Aristotle) gave them a social status which they had in no other Greek state. At Lesbos, during the brief blooming period of Æolian culture, in freedom of action and in mental training they were at least the equals of the male sex. The fact, however, remains that in Athens, the real centre of Hellenic life, women occupied a distinctly inferior rank. It is significant that in the *Lives of Plutarch*, whereas we read of many noble Lacedæmonian ladies, comparatively little account is taken of the wives or mothers of Athenian worthies.

Some scattered proverbs about the conduct of the tongue and the choice of friends, followed by an enumeration of lucky and unlucky days, and by a list of truly rustic rules of personal

behaviour, conclude the poem of the *Works and Days*. How far these saws and maxims belong to the original work of Hesiod it is quite impossible to say. The book became popular in education, and consequently suffered, like the gnomes of Theognis and Phocylides, from frequent interpolations at a later period. As it stands, the whole is chiefly valuable for the concrete picture which it offers of early peasant life in Hellas. As the Epics of Homer present us with the ideal toward which the princes and great nobles raised their souls amid the plenty and the splendour of their palaces, so, in the lines of Hesiod, we learn how the Thetes, whom Achilles envied in Elysium, toiled and suffered in their struggle for their only source of comfort, gold.

CHAPTER V.

PARMENIDES.

Greek Philosophical Poetry.—The Emergence of Philosophy from Mythology.—The Ionian Sages.—The Pythagoreans.—Anaxagoras.—Democritus.—The Eleatics.—Heraclitus.—Xenophanes of Colophon.—His Critique of the Myths.—Assertion of Monotheism.—Fragments of his Poem on Nature.—Parmenides of Elea.—His Political Importance.—Parmenides in the Dialogues of Plato.—His Metaphysic of Being.—His Natural Philosophy.—The Logic deduced from him by Zeno and Melissus.—Translation of the Fragments of his Poem.—The Dualism of Truth and Opinion.—Impossibility of obtaining Absolute Knowledge.

It might well be questioned whether the founders of the Eleatic School deserve to rank among Greek poets; for though they wrote hexameters, composing what the Greeks call ἔπη, yet it is clear that they did this with no artistic impulse, but only because in the dawn of thought it was easier to use verse than prose for fixed and meditated exposition. The moment in the development of human thought when abstractions were being wrung for the first time with toil from language, and when as yet the vehicle of rhythmic utterance seemed indispensable, is so interesting that a point in favour of Xenophanes and Parmenides may be fairly stretched, and a place may be given them between Hesiod, the creator of didactic poetry, and Empedocles, the inspired predecessor of Lucretius.

The problem which lay before the earliest philosophers of Greece, was how to emerge from mythological conceptions concerning the origin and nature of the world into a region of more

exact and abstract thought. They had their list of demiurgic agencies, Titans and deities, some of them dramatically personified in the poems of Homer and the legends of Olympus, others but vaguely indicated by the names of Earth and Ocean, Heaven and Time. The polytheistic and mythologising instincts of the race at large tended to individualise these primal powers with more and more distinctness, collecting legends around the more popular among them, and attributing moral sympathies and passions to those who were supposed to have relations with humanity. But there remained a background of dimly-descried and cloudy forces upon which the mythopœic imagination had taken little hold; and these supplied a starting-point for scientific speculation. It was in this field that the logical faculty of the Greek mind, no less powerful and active than its poetic fancy, came first into play. Thus we find Thales brooding in thought upon the mythus of Oceanus, and arriving at the conception of water as the elementary principle of the universe; while Gaia, or earth, in like manner is said to have stimulated Pherecydes. Anaximenes is reported to have chosen air as the groundwork of his cosmogony, and Heraclitus developed the material world from fire.

It must not be supposed that any of these early speculators invented a complete hypothesis for deducing phenomena from earth, air, fire, or water, as apprehended by the senses. Their elements or ἀρχαί are rather to be regarded in the light of symbols—metaphors adopted from experience for shadowing forth an extremely subtle and pervasive substance, a material of supersensible fluidity and elasticity, capable of infinite modification by rarefaction and condensation. At the same time they were seeking after intellectual abstractions; but the problems of philosophy as yet presented themselves in crude and concrete form to their intellects.

A further step in the direction of the abstract was taken by Anaximander, the Milesian astronomer, who is reported to have

made a sun-dial, to have calculated the recurrence of the equinoxes and the solstices, and to have projected geographical charts for the first time in Greece. This practical mathematician derived the universe from the unlimited, τὸ ἄπειρον, hurling thought thus at a venture, as it were, into the realm of metaphysical conceptions. It would appear from the dim and hazy tradition which we have received about Anaximander, that he instituted a polemic against the so-called physicists, arguing that to the elements of fire or water there can be attributed a beginning and an ending, but that the abstract indefinite, as uncreate and indestructible, takes precedence of all else. His thought, however, though fruitful of future consequences, was in itself barren; nor have we any reason to conclude that by the ἄπειρον he meant more than a primordial substance, or *Grund*, without quality and without limitation—a void and hollow form containing in itself potentialities of all things. It is characteristic of this early age of Greek speculation that Simplicius found it necessary to criticise even Anaximander for using poetic phraseology, ποιητικωτέροις ὀνόμασιν. In his polemic, however, he started one of the great puzzles, the contrast between birth and death, and the difficulty of discovering an element subject to neither, which agitated the schools of Greece throughout their long activity.

While the thinkers of Ionia were endeavouring to discover terms of infinite subtlety, through which to symbolise the uniform and unchangeable substance underlying the multiplicity of phenomena, the Pythagoreans in Italy turned their attention to the abstract relations of which numbers are the simplest expression. Numbers, they saw, are both thoughts and also at the same time universally applicable to things of sense. There is nothing tangible which can escape the formulæ of arithmetic. Mistaking a power of the mind for a power inherent in the universe, they imagined that the figures of the multiplication table were the essential realities of things, the authentic inner essence of the sensible world; and to number they attributed a mystic potency.

Speculation was still so immature that they failed to observe the sterility of the conception. This much, however, they effected:—by resting upon the essentially mental conception of quantity, and by apprehending the whole universe as number, they took the first important step in the direction of pure metaphysic.

Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, following another path, pronounced that the really efficient agency in the universe is Mind. For this utterance he has been justly eulogised by the metaphysicians of all succeeding centuries. It was, in fact, the starting-point of what in German phraseology is called *Begriffsphilosophie.* Anaxagoras insisted on a point which had been neglected by his contemporaries—the form-giving activity of mind, as known to us immediately in the human reason—and asserted the impossibility of leaving this out of the account of the universe. But, as Socrates complained, he stopped here, and diverged into material explanations, talking about attraction and repulsion and homogeneous particles, without attempting to connect them with the action of his Νοῦς.

Democritus of Abdera, a little later in time than the thinkers who have hitherto been mentioned, was so attracted by the indefinite divisibility of matter that he explained the universe by the theory of a Void in which an infinity of Atoms moved and met in varied combination. It is well known that this hypothesis, the parent of the Epicurean and the Lucretian systems, has been the mainstay of materialism in all ages, and that it has lately been received into favour by some of the most advanced physicists. Yet it must not be imagined that the Atomism of Democritus was in any true sense scientific according to our acceptation of the term. Like the Infinite of Anaximander, the Mind of Anaxagoras, the Numbers of Pythagoras, the fire of Heraclitus, his Plenum and Vacuum was a conjectural hypothesis founded upon no experiment or observation properly so called. All these early systems were freaks of fancy, shrewd guesses, poetic thoughts, in which abstractions

from language, elementary refinements upon mythology, together with crude speculations about natural objects, were made the groundwork of dogmatism. At the same time thought at this period was both active and creative; nearly all the permanent problems which occur to human ignorance—the antitheses of a beginning and an ending, of being and not being, of rest and motion, of the continuous and the discrete, of the one and the many—the criterion of knowledge and opinion, the antagonism of the senses and the reason, the relation of the vital principle to inanimate existence—were posed in the course of animated controversy. Logic had not been formulated as a method. Philosophical terminology had not as yet been settled. But the logical faculty was working in full vigour, and language was being made to yield abstractions hitherto unapprehended.

This brief survey of the origin of Greek philosophy will enable us to understand the position of the Eleatics. Regarded collectively, and as a school developing a body of doctrine, they advanced in abstraction beyond any of their predecessors or contemporaries. Whereas other philosophers had sought for the abstract in phenomenal elements, the Eleatics went straight through language to the notion of pure being: even the numbers of Pythagoras were not sufficient for the exigencies of their logic. The unity of being, as the one reality, and the absolute impossibility of not-being, revealed by the consciousness and demonstrated by language in the copula *ἐστί*, forms the groundwork of their dogmatism. How important was the principle thus introduced into the fabric of European thought, is evident to every student of the history of philosophy. It is enough in this place to point out to what extent it has influenced our language through such words as entity, existence, essence. The Eleatics may claim as their own coinage the title of all metaphysics—Ontology, or the Science of Being.

In order to make the attitude of these earliest Greek thinkers still more clear, we must return for a moment to Heraclitus,

who instituted a polemic against the Eleatic doctrine of Being. He asserted that Being is no more than not-Being. Regarded in itself as an abstraction, Being turns out to be identical with nothing. The relation of Being to not-Being in Becoming formed the central point of his metaphysic, and was enunciated in the axiom, All is flowing, πάντα ῥεῖ. Though the Heraclitean polemic was directed against the school at large, it would be in the last degree inaccurate to treat the Eleatic doctrine, as maintained by Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, and Melissus, from the point of view of one consistent system. By so doing not only would the truth of history be violated, but one of the most valuable examples of the growth of thought in Greece would be lost.

Xenophanes, who is regarded as the founder of the school, was a native of Colophon. He left his fatherland, and spent the greater portion of his life in Sicily and Magna Græcia. We hear of him first at Messana, then at Catana; and there is good reason to believe that he visited the Phocæan colony of Elea (afterwards Velia) on the western coast of Calabria, a little to the south of Pæstum. At all events, antiquity spoke of him as the father of philosophy at Elea, and Diogenes Laertius mentions a poem of two thousand hexameters which he composed in joint praise of this city and Colophon. Xenophanes lived to a great age. In a couplet preserved from one of his elegies he speaks of having wandered, absorbed in thought and contemplation, for sixty-seven years through Hellas, and fixes twenty-five years as the age at which he began his travels. He was celebrated, like his fellow-countryman, Mimnermus, for his elegiac poetry, some fragments of which are among the most valuable relics we possess of that species of composition. About 538 B.C. is the date usually assigned to him.

The starting-point of philosophy for Xenophanes was found in theology. "Looking up to universal heaven," says Aristotle, "he proclaimed that unity is God." The largest fragment of

his metaphysical poem consists of a polemic against Polytheism, both as regards the anthropomorphic conception of deity prevalent in Greece, and also as regards the immorality attributed by Homer and Hesiod to the gods. His own God is a high abstraction of mind, one and indivisible, without motion, without beginning or ending, in no way like to man. To the divine unity he attributed thought and volition; but he does not appear to have attempted to connect God with the universe. Like the other speculators of his age and nation, he theoretically deduced the world from simple elements, choosing earth and water, as we gather from some fragments of his poem, for the primordial constituents. At the same time he held a doctrine which afterwards became the central point of Eleatic science. This was a disbelief in the evidence of the senses, a despair of empirical knowledge, which contrasts singularly with his own vehement dogmatism upon the nature of the Divine Being. Thus the originality of Xenophanes consisted in his pronouncing, without proof, that the universe must be regarded as an unity, and that this unity is the Divine Existence, all human mythology being but dreams and delusions. Of his philosophical poem only inconsiderable portions have been preserved. These, however, are sufficient to make clear the line he took, both in his assertion of monotheism and his polemic against the anthropomorphic theology of the Greeks. Such as they are, I have translated them as follows:*—

"One god there is, among gods and men the greatest, neither in body like to mortals, nor in mind.

"With the whole of him he sees, with the whole of him he thinks, with the whole of him he hears.

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* In my translations of the fragments of Xenophanes and Parmenides I have followed the text of their most recent editor, W. A. Mullach, not without reference, however, to that of Karsten, some of whose emendations seem almost necessary to the sense. The meaning of many Parmenidean sentences may, however, be fairly said to be now irrecoverable, owing to the uncertainty of readings and the lack of context.

"Without exertion, by energy of mind he sways the universe of things.

"That he abides for ever in the same state, without movement, or change from place to place, is evident.

"But mortals fancy that gods come into being like themselves, and have their senses, voice, and body. But, of a truth, if oxen or lions had hands, and could draw with their hands, and make what men make, then horses like unto horses, and oxen like unto oxen, would both paint the images of gods, and shape their bodies also after the similitude of their own limbs.

"Homer and Hesiod attributed to gods everything that is disgraceful and blameworthy among men, and very many lawless deeds of gods they recorded—theft, adultery, and mutual deceit."

Another set of scattered fragments, small in number and meagre in their information, from the poem by Xenophanes on φύσις, show that he held the views afterwards developed by Parmenides concerning the uncertainty of human opinion, and that the elemental substances which he favoured in his cosmogonical theory were earth and water. These also I have translated :—

"For all of us from earth and water sprang.

"Earth and water are all things that come into being and have birth.

"The spring of water is the sea.

"This upper surface of the earth beneath our feet is open to the sight, and borders on the air; but the lower parts reach down into infinity.

"What we call Iris, that also is a cloud, purple-dark, scarlet-bright, yellow-pale to look upon.

"The very truth itself no man who hath been or will be can know concerning gods and all whereof I speak; for though he publish the most absolute, yet even so he does not know : opinion is supreme o'er all things.

"These things are matters of opinion, shadows of the truth.

"Not from the beginning did gods reveal all things to mortals; but in course of time by seeking they make progress in discovery."

The essential weakness of the Eleatic way of thinking was not glaringly apparent, though implicit, in the utterance of Xenophanes. This consisted in the unreconciled antithesis between the world of unity, of true being, of rational thought, and the world of multiplicity, of phenomenal appearance, of opinion. By pushing the tenets of his master to their logical conclusions,

and by exchanging theological for metaphysical phraseology, Parmenides, the greatest teacher of the school, exposed the fatal insufficiency of Eleatic dualism. At the same time he achieved an ever-memorable triumph in philosophy by forcing the problem of essential reality upon the earliest Greek speculators, and by defining the battle-ground of future ontological controversy.

Parmenides, a native of Elea, who flourished about the year 503, enjoyed a reputation in his native city scarcely inferior to that of Pythagoras at Crotona, of Empedocles at Acragas, or of Solon at Athens. Speusippus, quoted by Diogenes Laertius, asserts that the magistrates of Elea were yearly sworn to observe the laws enacted by Parmenides. Cebes talks about a "Pythagorean or Parmenidean mode of life," as if the austere ascesis of the Samian philosopher had been adopted or imitated by the Eleatic. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that Parmenides held intercourse with members of the Pythagorean sect, his neighbours in the south of Italy. Diogenes Laertius relates that he was united in the bonds of closest friendship to Ameinias and Diochætes, two Pythagoreans. Of these the latter was a poor man, but excellent in breeding and in character; Parmenides so loved him and respected him that, when he died, he dedicated a hero's chapel to his memory. The philosophers of this period in Greece, as might be proved abundantly, were no mere students, but men of action and political importance. Their reputation for superior wisdom caused them to be consulted in affairs of state, and to be deferred to in matters of constitutional legislation. Some of them, like Thales, Anaximander, and Empedocles, were employed on works of public utility. Others, like Pythagoras, remodelled the society of cities, or, like Anaxagoras, through their influence with public men like Pericles, raised the tone of politics around them. All of them devoted a large portion of their time and attention to the study of public questions. It

was this kind of prestige, we may conjecture, which, in the next phase of Greek thought, threw so much power into the hands of sophists, and which finally encouraged Plato in his theory that those states would be best governed where the sages were the rulers.

Of Parmenides himself some precious notices have been preserved by Plato. It appears that the great Eleatic teacher visited Athens in his old age. Socrates was a young man at the period of this visit; and Plato, whether inventing an occasion for their meeting or relying on actual tradition, brings them into conversation. In the prelude to the dialogue *Parmenides* we read:*—

"He told us that Pythodorus had described to him the appearance of Parmenides and Zeno; they came to Athens, he said, at the great Panathenæa; the former was, at the time of his visit, about sixty-five years old, very white with age, but well-favoured. Zeno was nearly forty years of age, of a noble figure and fair aspect; and in the days of his youth he was reported to have been beloved of Parmenides. He said that they lodged with Pythodorus in the Ceramicus, outside the wall, whither Socrates and others came to see them; they wanted to hear some writings of Zeno, which had been brought to Athens by them for the first time. He said that Socrates was then very young, and that Zeno read them to him in the absence of Parmenides, and had nearly finished when Pythodorus entered, and with him Parmenides and Aristoteles, who was afterwards one of the Thirty; there was not much more to hear, and Pythodorus had heard Zeno repeat them before."

The *Theætetus* contains another allusion to Parmenides, which proves in what reverence the old philosopher was held by Socrates:—

"My reason is that I have a kind of reverence, not so much for Melissus and the others, who say that 'all is one and at rest,' as for the great leader himself, Parmenides, venerable and awful, as in Homeric language he may be called—him I should be ashamed to approach in a spirit unworthy of him. I met him when he was an old man and I was a mere youth, and he appeared to me to have a glorious depth of mind.

* This and the two following translations from Plato are Professor Jowett's.

And I am afraid that we may not understand his language, and may fall short even more of his meaning."

Finally, in the *Sophistes* a passing allusion to the same event is put into the mouth of Socrates: "I remember hearing Parmenides use the latter of the two methods, when I was a young man, and he was far advanced in years, in a very noble discussion." These notices of the Eleatic sage, we feel, are not in any sense accidental. Plato has introduced them in important moments of his three most studied dialogues upon those very points which occupied the mind of Parmenides, and by the elaboration of which he made his greatest contribution to philosophy. The problems of knowledge and of the relation of the phenomenal universe to real existence were for the first time methodically treated in the school of Elea. Their solution in the theory of Ideas was the main object of Plato's philosophical activity.

The unity asserted by Xenophanes gave its motto to the Eleatic school; ἓν τὰ πάντα became their watchword. Parmenides, however, abstracted from this unity all theological attributes. Plain existence, obtained apparently by divesting thought of all qualifications derived from sensation and imagination, and regarding it in primitive and abstract nakedness or nothingness, was the only positive condition which he left to the principle of Being; and though he seems to have identified this Being with Thought, we must be careful not to be misled by modern analogies into fancying that his ἀρχή involved a purely intellectual idealism. Nor, again, can we regard it as the totality of things presented to the senses; the most earnest polemic of the philosopher is directed against this view. The Unity, the Being, of Parmenides, was in truth the barest metaphysical abstraction, deduced, we are tempted to believe, in the first instance from a simple observation of language, and yet, when formed, not wholly purged from corporeity. Being is proved by the word ἐστί. The singular

number indicates the unity of the subject; the present tense proves its eternity, for it neither asserts a *has been* nor a *will be*, but an everlasting *is*. Its antithesis Not-Being is impossible and inconceivable; οὐκ ἐστί. Completing his conception of Being as the sole reality, and carrying out the arguments attributed by Aristotle to his master,* Parmenides shows that the eternal One is indivisible, immovable, continuous, homogeneous, absolutely self-identical, beyond the reach of birth, or change, or dissolution. Furthermore it is finite and spheroid. In rounding and completing his notion of the Unity of Being, Parmenides seems at this point to have passed into the region of geometrical abstractions. The sphere of mathematics requires to be circumscribed by a superficies equidistant at all points from the centre. These conditions of perfection Parmenides attributed to Being, forgetting that the finite sphere thus conceived by him implied, by a necessity of human thought, a beyond against which it should be defined. At the same time, this geometrical analogy prevents us from assuming that the further identification of Being with Thought excluded a concrete and almost material conception of the Ens.

As opposed to this unique ἀρχή, the sole and universal reality, which can only be apprehended by the reason, and which is eternally and continuously One, Parmenides places the totality of phenomena, multiplex, diverse, subject to birth, change, division, dissolution, motion. These, he asserts, are non-existent, the illusions of the senses, mere names, the vague and unreal dream-world of impotent mortals. Not having advanced in his analysis of thought beyond the first category of Being, he felt obliged to abandon the multiplicity of things as hopeless and unthinkable. Yet he cannot deny their phenomenal existence; there they are, deceiving the sage and the simple man alike: experience asserts them; language and the opinion

* See the treatise, *De Xenophane, Zenone, et Gorgia.*

of humanity take them for granted as realities. Parmenides feels bound to offer an explanation of this cosmos of illusion, this many-formed and many-coloured mirage. His teaching consequently contains a paradox deeply embedded in its very substance. Having first expounded the law of absolute truth, he proceeds to render a grave and meditated account of error. Having demonstrated the sole existence of abstract Being, he turns a page and begins to discourse like any physicist of his age in Greece, concerning Light and Night, Hot and Cold, Fire and Earth, Active and Passive, Male and Female, Rare and Dense. By a singular irony of fate it was precisely for this portion of his teaching that he received the praise of Bacon in the *Novum Organum*. To connect the doctrine of Being, τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν, and the doctrine of Appearance, τὰ πρὸς δόξαν, was beyond his power. It was what Plato afterwards attempted in his theory of ideas, and Aristotle in the theory of forms and matter, εἴδη and ὕλη. Parmenides himself seems to have regarded man as a part of the cosmos, subject to its phantasmagoric changes and illusions, yet capable of comprehending that, while the substratum of Being is alone immutable, real, and one, all else is shifting, non-existent, and many. Neglect, he says, the object of sense, the plurality of things obedient to change, and you will arrive at the object of reason, the unity that alters not and can be only apprehended by thought. Yet, while on the one hand he did not disdain to theorise the universe of sense, so, on the other hand, as already hinted, he had not arrived at the point of abstracting corporeity from Being. To do this from his point of view was indeed impossible. Having posited pure being as the sole reality, he was obliged to form a figurative presentation of it to his mind. A new stage had to be accomplished by human thought before the intellect could fairly grapple with the problems nakedly and paradoxically propounded by the sage of Elea.

From the immense importance attached by Parmenides to

the verb ἐστί, and from his assertion that men deal with names and not with realities, it followed that to his metaphysical teaching a logical set of corollaries had to be appended. To construct these was the task of Zeno, his beloved pupil and authorised successor. Zeno undertook to maintain the Parmenidean Unity, both against the vulgar evidence of the senses and also against philosophers who, like Heraclitus, directed their attention to the flux and multiplicity of things. His method was, not to prove the necessity of unity at rest, but to demonstrate the contradictions involved in the ideas of plurality and motion. The intellectual difficulties implied in the divisibility of time and space and matter were developed by Zeno with a force and subtlety that justified Aristotle in calling him the founder of dialectic. His logic, however, was but the expansion of positions implicit in Xenophanes and clearly indicated by Parmenides. How the Eleatic arguments, as further handled by Melissus, helped the Sophists, and influenced the school of Megara, who went so far as to refuse any but identical propositions, are matters that belong to another chapter of Greek history. So, too, is Plato's attempt to resolve the antinomies revealed in human thought by the polemic of his predecessors. Enough has now been said to serve as preface to the following version of the fragments of Parmenides.

His poem—for, strange as it must always seem, Parmenides committed the exposition of his austerely abstract and argumentative doctrine to hexameters—begins with an epical allegory. He feigns to have been drawn by horses on a chariot to the house of Truth: the horses may, perhaps, be taken, as in Plato's vision of the *Phædrus*, to symbolise faculties of the soul; and the gates of Truth open upon two roads—one called the way of night, or error; the other of light, or real knowledge. The goddess who dwells here, divine Sophia, instructs him equally in the lore of truth and of opinion and makes no

attempt, as will be seen from her own words, to conceal the futility of the second part of her discourse. From a literary point of view the poem has no merit. Even the exordium is stiff and tame. It begins thus :—

"The steeds which bear me, and have brought me to the bounds of my desire, since they drew and carried me into the way renowned of Her who leads the wise man to all knowledge—oh that road I journeyed, on that road they bore me, those steeds of thought that whirl the car along. But maidens showed the way, sun-born maids, who left the halls of gloom and brought us to the light, withdrawing with their fingers from their brows the veils. And the axle in the socket made a whistling sound, glowing as by two round wheels on either side it ran, while the steeds drove the car swiftly on. There are the gates which open on the paths of Night and Day. A lintel shuts them in above, and a floor of stone beneath; but the airy space they close is fastened with huge doors, which Justice the avenger locks or unlocks by the key she holds. Her did the maidens sue with gentle words, and wisely won her to draw for them the bolted barrier from the gates. The gates flew open, and the doors yawned wide, back rolling in the sockets their brazen hinges wrought with clasps and nails. Straight through the portal drove the maidens car and horses on the broad highway. And me the goddess graciously received; she took my right hand in her hand, and spoke these words, addressing me: 'Child of man, companion of immortal charioteers, that comest drawn by horses to our home, welcome! for thee no evil fate sent forth to travel on this path—far from the track of men indeed it lies—but Right and Justice were thy guides. Thy lot it is all things to learn; both the sure heart of truth that wins assent, and the vain fancies of mortals which have no real ground of faith. Yet these, too, shalt thou learn, since it behoves thee to know all opinions, testing them, and travelling every field of thought.'"

Here the exordium, as we possess it, ends, and we start upon the fragments of the lecture addressed by divine Sophia to the mortal sage. The order and the connection of these fragments are more than doubtful. So much, however, is clear, that they fall into two sections—the first treating of scientific truth, the second of popular opinion. The instrument of knowledge in the one case is the reason; in the other the senses bear confused and untrustworthy witness to phenomena.

"Come now, for I will tell, and do thou hear and keep my words, what are the only ways of inquiry that lead to knowledge. The one which

certifies that being is, and that not-being is not, is the pathway of persuasion, for truth follows it. The other which declares that being is not, and that not-being must be, that I affirm is wholly unpersuasive; for neither couldst thou know not-being, since it cannot be got at, nor couldst thou utter it in words, seeing that thought and being are the same.

"To me it is indifferent where I begin, for again to the same point I shall return. It must be that speech and thought are being, for being is, and that not-being is nothing: which things I bid thee ponder. First, keep thy mind from that path of inquiry, then, too, from that on which mortals who know nothing wander in doubt; helplessness sways in their breasts the erring mind; hither and thither are they borne, deaf, yea and blind, in wonderment, confused crowds who fancy being and not-being are the same and not the same; the way of all of them leads backwards."

Some light is thrown upon these fragments by a passage in the *Sophistes* of Plato, where the Eleatic stranger is made to say: "In the days when I was a boy, the great Parmenides protested against this (*i.e.*, against asserting the existence of not-being), and to the end of his life he continued to inculcate the same lesson—always repeating, both in verse and out of verse, *Keep your mind from this way of inquiry, for never will you show that not-being is.*" The fragment which immediately follows, if we are right in assuming the continuity and order of its verses, forms the longest portion of the poem extant.

"Never do thou learn to fancy that things that are not, are; but keep thy mind from this path of inquiry; nor let custom force thee to pursue that beaten way, to use blind eyes and sounding ear and tongue, but judge by reason the knotty argument which I declare. One only way of reasoning is left—that being is. Wherein are many signs that it is uncreate and indestructible, whole in itself, unique in kind, immovable and everlasting. It never was, nor will be, since it exists as a simultaneous present, a continuous unity. What origin shall we seek of it? Where and how did it grow? That it arose from not-being I will not suffer thee to say or think, for it cannot be thought or said that being is not. Then, too, what necessity could have forced it to the birth at an earlier or later moment? for neither birth nor beginning belongs to being. Wherefore either to be or not to be, is the unconditioned alternative. Nor will the might of proof allow us to believe that anything can spring from being but itself. Therefore the law of truth permits no birth or dissolution in it, no remission of its chains, but holds it firm. This, then, is the point for decision: it is, or it is not. Now we have settled, as necessity obliged, to leave the one path, inconceivable,

unnamed, for it is not the true way; but to affirm, as sure, that being is. How then could being have a future or a past? If it began to be, or if it is going to be, then it is not: wherefore birth and death are alike put aside as inconceivable. Nor is it divisible, since it is all homogeneous, in no part more itself than in another, which would prevent its coherence, nor in any part less; but all is full of being. Wherefore it is one continuous whole, for being draws to being. Immovable within the bounds of its great chains it is, without beginning, without end, since birth and dissolution have moved far away, whom certainty repelled. Eternally the same, in the same state, for and by itself, it abides; thus fixed and firm it stays, for strong necessity holds it in the chains of limit and clenches it around. Wherefore being cannot be infinite, seeing it lacks nothing; and if it were, it would lack all.

"Look now at things which, though absent, are present to the mind. For never shall being from being be sundered so as to lose its continuity by dispersion or recombination.

"Thought and the object of thought are the same, for without being, in which is affirmation, thou wilt not find thought. For nothing is or will be besides being, since fate hath bound it to remain alone and unmoved, which is named the universe—all things that mortal men held fixed, believing in their truth—birth, and death, to be and not to be, change of place, and variety of colour.

"Now since the extreme limit of being is defined, the whole is like a well-rounded sphere, of equal radius in all directions, for it may not be less or greater in one part or another. For neither is there not-being to prevent its attaining to equality, nor is it possible that being should in one place be more and in another less than being, since all is inviolably one. For this is certain, that it abides, an equal whole all round, within its limits.

"Here then I conclude my true discourse and meditation upon Truth. Turn now and learn the opinions of men, listening to the deceptive order of my words."

The divine Sophia calls the speech which she is about to utter deceptive (ἀπατηλόν), because it has to do no longer with the immutable and imperturbable laws of entity, but only with the delusions to which the human mind is exposed by the evidence of the senses. If Parmenides had been in any true sense of the word a poet, he would not have subjected Sophia to the ridicule of condemning her own observations, when he might have invented some other machinery for the conveyance of his physical hypothesis. Nothing, in fact, can be more artistically monstrous than to put lies into the mouth of Truth

personified. The fragments of this portion of his poem may, in spite of their scientific worthlessness, be translated, if only for the sake of completeness. We must suppose, therefore, that Wisdom has resumed her parable, and is speaking as follows :—

"Two forms have they determined by their minds to name, for those are wrong who take but one of these. Corporeally and by signs they have distinguished them, setting on the one side fire, ethereal, gentle, very subtle, everywhere identical, but different from the other element. That, too, is self-identical, diverse from fire, dark night, a thick and weighty body. Of these I will reveal to you the whole disposition, as it appears, so that no thought of mortals may ever elude you.

"Now, seeing that all things are called by the name of light and night, and the qualities that severally pertain to them, the universe is full of light and murky night, rivals equally balanced, since neither partakes of the other.

"For the narrower spheres have been fashioned of impure fire; those next of night, interpenetrated by a portion of flame; and in the midst of all is the goddess who controls the whole. For everywhere she is the cause of dire parturition and procreation, making female mix with male, and male with female."

At this point in the murky exposition there shines forth a single line, which, seized upon by poets and poetic souls in after years, traverses the dismal waste of false physics and imperfect metaphysics like a streak of inspiration—"fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky."

"Love, first of all the gods, she formed."

"Thou, too, shalt know the nature of ether, and in ether all the signs, and the hidden acts of the bright sun's pure lamp, and whence they sprang; and thou shalt learn the revolutions of the round-eyed moon, and whence she is; and thou shalt understand the all-surrounding heaven, whence it arose, and how fate ruling it bound it to keep the limits of the stars.

"How earth and sun and moon and ether shared by all, and the galaxy and farthest Olympus, and the hot might of stars sprang into being.

"Another light that shines in revolution round the earth by night.

"For ever gazing at the radiant sun.

"For as the elements are mixed in the jointed framework of our limbs, so are the minds of men made up. For the nature of the members is the same as that which thinks in the case of all and each; it is mind that rules.

"From the right side boys, from the left girls.

"Thus, according to opinion, were born and now are these things: and afterwards, when they have grown to the full, will perish: whereto men have affixed, unto each, a name."

It is only by a complete translation of the extant fragments of Parmenides that any notion can be formed of the hiatus between what he chose to call truth, and what he termed opinion. As a thinker, he revealed both the weakness of his metaphysical system and the sincerity of his intention by proclaiming this abrupt division between the realm of the pure reason and the field of the senses, without attempting a synthesis. No other speculator has betrayed the vanity of dogmatism about the Absolute more conclusively by the simultaneous presentation of lame guesses in the region of the Relative. The impartial student of his verse is forced to the conclusion that the titles τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν and τὰ πρὸς δόξαι, which have been given to the two departments of his exposition, are both arbitrary; for what warrant have we that his intuitions into the nature of pure Being are more certain than his guesses about the conditions of phenomenal existence? Parmenides might indeed be selected as a parable of the human mind pretending to a knowledge of the unconditioned truth, and after all arriving at nothing more cogent than opinion. The innumerable ontological assertions, which in the pride of the speculative reason have been made by men, are δόξαι, and the epigram pointed by Parmenides against the common folk, is equally applicable to his own sect—

Κῶφοι ὁμῶς τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα.

As soon as men begin to dogmatise, whether the supposed truth to which they pin their faith be the barest metaphysical abstraction, or some assumed intuition into the Divine nature, they create a schism between the multiplicity of the universe and the unity which they proclaim. In other words, they distinguish, like Parmenides, between what they arbitrarily

denote as truth and what they cannot account for as phenomena. To quit the sphere of our own mind is impossible; and therefore nothing can be discovered which is not some mode of the mind. The utmost the metaphysician can do is to describe the operations of the human intellect without explaining its existence, and all systematised knowledge is but a classification of the categories of consciousness. Thus the sophistic position that man is for man the measure of all things is irrefutable. But when he attempts to hypostasise his own thoughts as realities, to argue outward from his conceptions to the universe, this is the same as taking a leap in the dark across an undefined abyss from the only ascertained standing-ground to a hypothetical beyond.

During the two-and-twenty centuries which have elapsed since the days of Parmenides, the philosophers have learned wisdom. They are now too wary to parade the distinction between two kinds of opinion, and to construct one system of truth, another of illusion. They either content themselves with omitting what they regard as the insoluble; or they endeavour to invent an all-embracing schema, which shall supersede the cruder distinctions between subject and object, mind and nature, ego and non-ego. Yet nothing in the realm of absolute knowledge has been gained in all this space of time.

The owl of Minerva, to quote one of Hegel's most luminous epigrams, still starts upon its flight when the evening twilight, succeeding the day of work, has fallen. Metaphysic goes on shaping from the human consciousness a fabric which it calls reality. Science has magnified and multiplied phenomena until, instead of one, we have in every case a million problems to employ intelligence. Social conditions grow more complex, and more and more is ascertained about the inner life of man. But the fact remains that, while theologian, logician, physicist, and moralist, each from his own standing-

point, may cry "Eureka!" we can know nothing in itself. The most complicated system, created by the Aristotle of the modern world, involves at the outset an assumption. From reflection on the laws of human thought, on the varied acquisitions of the human mind, and on the successive phases of human history, it carries over the synthetic statement of its conclusions to the account of the universe. In other words, it postulates the identity of the human and the Divine mind, and ends by asserting that thought is the only reality. Does not a fallacy lie in this, that while the mind possesses the faculty of reflecting upon itself, everything which it knows is of necessity expressed in terms of itself, and therefore in pretending to give an account of the universe it is only giving an account of its own operations? The philosophy of the *Idee* is thus a way of looking at things; to explain them or deduce them is beyond its reach. How, for example, except by exercise of faith, by dogmatism and initial begging of the question, can we be assured that an intelligence differently constituted from the human mind should not cognise a different κόσμος νοητός or intelligible world, and be equally justified in claiming to have arrived at Truth? It is comparatively easy to acquire encyclopædic knowledge, to construct a system, to call the keystone of the system the *Idee*, and to assert that the *Idee* is God. But is all this of any value except as a machine for arranging and formulating thoughts and opinions? At the end of philosophies one feels tempted to exclaim:

> "I heard what was said of the universe,
> Heard it and heard it of several thousand years:
> It is middling well as far as it goes,—But is that all?"

CHAPTER VI.

ÆSCHYLUS.

Life of Æschylus.—Nature of his Inspiration.—The Theory of Art in the *Ion* of Plato.—Æschylus and Sophocles.—What Æschylus accomplished for the Attic Drama.—His Demiurgic Genius.—Colossal Scale of his Work.—Marlowe.—Oriental Imagery.—Absence of Love as a Motive in his Plays.—The Organic Vitality of his Art.—Opening Scenes.—Messenger.—Chorus.—His Theology.—Destiny in Æschylus.—The Domestic Curse—His Character-drawing—Clytemnestra.—Difficulty of Dealing with the *Prometheus*.—What was his Fault?—How was Zeus justified?—Shelley's Opinion.—The Lost Trilogy of *Prometheus*.—Middle Plays in Trilogies.—Attempt to reconstruct a *Prometheus*.—The Part of Herakles.—Obscurity of the Promethean Legend.—The Free Handling of Myths permitted to the Dramatist.—The *Oresteia*.—Its Subject.—The Structure of the Three Plays.—The *Agamemnon*.—Its Imagery.—Cassandra.—The Cry of the King.—The Chorus.—Iphigeneia at the Altar.—Menelaus abandoned by Helen.—The Dead Soldiers on the Plains of Troy.—The *Persæ*.—The Crime of Xerxes.—Irony of the Situation.—The Description of the Battle of Salamis.—The Style of Æschylus.—His Religious Feeling.

ÆSCHYLUS, son of Euphorion, was born at Eleusis, in 525 B.C. When he was thirty-five years of age, just ten years after the production of his first tragedy, he fought at Marathon. This fact is significant in its bearings on his art and on his life. Æschylus belonged to a family distinguished during the decisive actions of the Persian war by their personal bravery. Ameinias, his brother, gained the *aristeia*, or reward for valour, at the battle of Salamis; and there was an old picture in the theatre of Dionysus at Athens which represented the great deeds of

the poet and his brother Cynægeirus at Marathon. Of his military achievements he was more proud than of his poetical success; for he mentions the former and is silent about the latter in the epitaph he wrote for his own tomb. Of his actual life at Athens, we only know this much, that he sided with the old aristocratic party. His retirement to Sicily after his defeat by Sophocles in 468 B.C. arose probably from the fact that Cimon, who adjudged the prize, was leader of the democratic opposition, and was felt to have allowed his political leanings to influence his decision. His second retirement to Sicily in 453 B.C., after the production of the *Oresteia*, in which he unsuccessfully supported the Areiopagus against Pericles, was due, perhaps, in like manner to his disagreement with the rising powers in the State. That at some period of his career he was publicly accused of impiety, because he had either divulged the mysteries of Demeter, or had offended popular taste by his presentation of the *Furies* on the stage, rests upon sufficient antique testimony. Such charges were not uncommon at Athens, as might be proved by the biographies of Anaxagoras and Socrates. But the exact nature of the prosecution directed against Æschylus is not known; we cannot connect it with any of his extant works for certain, or determine how far it affected his action. He died at Gela, in 456 B.C., aged sixty-nine, having spent his life partly at Athens and partly at the court of Hiero, pursuing in both places his profession of tragic poet and chorus-master.

Pausanias tells a story of his early vocation to dramatic art:—"When he was a boy he was set to watch grapes in the country, and there fell asleep. In his slumber Dionysus appeared to him, and ordered him to apply himself to tragedy. At daybreak he made the attempt, and succeeded very easily." There is no reason that this legend should not have been based on truth. It was the general opinion of antiquity that Æschylus was a poet possessed by the deity, working less by artistic

method than by immediate inspiration. Athenæus asserts crudely that he composed his tragedies while drunk with wine: μεθύων γοῦν ἔγραφε τὰς τραγῳδίας: and Sophocles is reported to have told him that, "He did what he ought to do, but did it without knowing." Longinus, in like manner, after praising Æschylus for the audacity of his imagination and the heroic grandeur of his conceptions, adds that his plays were frequently unpolished, unrefined, ill-digested, and rough in style. Similar expressions of opinion might be quoted from Quintilian, who describes his style as "sublime and weighty, and grandiloquent often to a fault, but in most of his compositions rude and wanting in order." He adds, that "the Athenians allowed later poets to correct his dramas and to bring them into competition under new forms, when many of them gained prizes." Æschylus seems, therefore, to have impressed critics of antiquity with the god-intoxicated passion of his genius rather than with the perfection of his style or the consummate beauty of his art. It is possible that he received less justice from his fellow-countrymen than we, who have been educated by the Shakspearean drama, can now pay him.

Æschylus might be selected to illustrate the artistic psychology of Plato. In the *Phædrus* Plato lays down the doctrine that poetic inspiration is akin to madness—an efflation from the Muses, a divine mania analogous to love. In the *Ion* he further develops this position, and asserts that "all good poets compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed." The analogy which he selects is drawn from the behaviour of Bacchantes under the influence of Dionysus. He wishes to distinguish between the mental operations of the poet and the philosopher, to show that the regions of poetry and science are separate, and to prove that rule and method are less sure guides than instinct when the work to be produced is a poem. "The poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in

him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him; when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles." The final dictum of the *Ion* is, "inspiration, not art," θεῖον καὶ μὴ τεχνικόν. It is curious to find a Greek of the best age, himself in early days a poet, and throughout distinguished by genius allied to the poetic, thus boldly and roundly stating a theory which corresponds to the vulgar notion that poetry comes by nature, untutored and untaught, and which seems to contradict the practice and opinion of supreme authorities like Sophocles and Goethe. The truth is, that among artists we find two broadly differentiated types. The one kind produce their best work when all their faculties are simultaneously excited, and when the generative impulse takes possession of them. They seem to obey the dictates of a power superior to their ordinary faculties. The other kind are always conscious of their methods and their aims; they do nothing, as it were, by accident; they avoid improvisation, and subordinate their creative faculty to reason. The laws of art may be just as fully appreciated by the more instinctive artists, and may have equally determined their choice of form and their calculation of effects; but at the moment of production these rules are thrust into the background, whereas they are continually present to the minds of the deliberate workers. It may be said in passing, that this distinction enables us to understand some phrases which the Italians, acutely sensitive to artistic conditions, have reserved for passionate and highly-inspired workers; they speak, for instance, of painting a picture or blocking out a statue *con furia*, when the artist is a Tintoretto or a Michael Angelo. If th re is any truth at all in this analysis, we are justified in believing that Æschylus belonged to the former, and Sophocles to the latter class of poets, and that this is the secret of the criticism passed by Sophocles upon his predecessor. The account which Æschylus himself gave of his

tragedies throws no light upon his method; he is reported to have said that they were "fragments picked up from the mighty feasts of Homer." The value he attached to them is proved by his saying that he dedicated what he wrote to Time.

Though the ancients may have been right in regarding Æschylus as an enthusiastic writer, obeying the impulse of the god within him rather than the rules of reason, no dramatic poet ever had a higher sense of the æsthetic unity which tragedy demands. Each of his masterpieces presents to the imagination a coherent and completely organised whole; every part is penetrated with the dominant thought and passion that inspired it. He had, moreover, the strongest sense of the formal requirements of his art. Tragedy had scarcely passed beyond the dithyrambic stage when he received it from the hands of Phrynichus. Æschylus gave it the form which, with comparatively unimportant alterations, it maintained throughout the brilliant period of Attic culture. It was he who curtailed the function of the Chorus and developed dialogue, thus expanding the old Thespian elements of tragedy in accordance with the true spirit of the drama. By adding a second actor, by attending diligently to the choric songs and dances, by inventing the cothurnus and the tragic mask, and by devising machinery and scenes adapted to the large scale of the Athenian stage, he gave its permanent form to the dramatic art of the Greeks. However god-possessed he may have been during the act of composition, he was therefore a wise critic and a potent founder in all matters pertaining to the theatre. Yet though Æschylus in this way made the drama, the style in which he worked went out of date in his own lifetime. So rapid was the evolution of intelligence at Athens that during a single generation his tragedies became, we will not say old-fashioned, but archaic. They were duly put upon the stage; a chorus at the public expense was provided for their representation, and the MS. which authorised their canon and their

text was regarded as a public treasure. Yet the Athenians already had come to love and respect them in the same way as the English race love and respect the Oratorios of Handel. They praised them for their unapproachable magnificence; they knew that no man of the latter days could match them in their own kind; but they criticised their antique form and obsolete embellishments. The poet who in his youth had played the part of innovator, and who had shocked the public by his realistic presentation of the Furies, depended in the heyday of the fame of Aristophanes upon conservative support and favour.

Æschylus was essentially the demiurge of ancient art. The purely creative faculty has never been exhibited upon a greater scale, or applied to material more utterly beyond the range of feebler poets. He possessed in the highest degree the power of giving life and form to the vast, the incorporeal, and the ideal. In his dramas, mountains were made to speak; Oceanus received shape, conversing face to face with the Titan Prometheus, while his daughters, nurslings of the waves and winds, were gathered on the Scythian crags in groups to listen to their argument. The old intangible, half-mystical, half-superstitious, fears of the Greek conscience became substantial realities in his mind. Justice and Insolence and Até no longer floated, dreamlike, in the background of religious thought: he gave them a pedigree, connected them in a terrible series, and established them as ministers of supreme Zeus. The Eumenides, whom the Greeks before him had not dared to figure to their fancy, assumed a form more hideous than that of Gorgons or Harpies. Their symbolic torches, their snake-entwined tresses, their dreadful eyes, and nostrils snorting fiery breath, were shown for the first time visibly in the trilogy of *Orestes*. It was a revelation which Greek art accepted as decisive. Thus the imagination of Æschylus added new deities to the Athenian Pantheon. The same creative faculty enabled him to inform elemental substances, fire, water, air, with personal vitality.

The heaven, in his verse, yearns to wound the earth with love-embraces; the falling rain impregnates the rich soil. The throes of Ætna are a Titan's groaning. The fire that leaps from Ida to the Hermæan crags of Lemnos, from Ægiplanctus to the Arachnæan height, has life within it. There is nothing dead, devoid of soul, in the world of this arch-mythopoet. Even the ghosts and phantoms, dreams and omens, on which he loves to dwell, are substantial. Their reality exists outside the soul they dominate.

As befits a demiurgic nature, Æschylus conceived and executed upon a stupendous scale. His outlines are huge; his figures are colossal; his style is broad and sweeping—like a river in its fulness and its might. Each of his plays might be compared to a gigantic statue, whereof the several parts, taken separately, are beautiful, while the whole is put together with majestic harmony. But as the sculptor in modelling a colossus, cannot afford to introduce the details which would grace a chimney ornament, so Æschylus was forced to sacrifice the working-out of minor motives. His imagination, penetrated through and through with the spirit of his subject as a whole, was more employed in presenting a series of great situations, wrought together and combined into a single action, than in elaborating the minutiæ of characters and plots. The result has been that those students who delight in detail, have complained of a certain disproportion between his huge design and his insufficient execution. It has too frequently been implied that he could rough-hew like a Cyclops, but that he could not finish like a Praxiteles; that he was more capable of sketching in an outline than of filling up its parts. Fortunately we possess the means of laying bare the misconception upon which these complaints are founded. There still remains one, but only one, of his colossal works entire. The *Oresteia* is sufficient to prove that we gain no insight into his method as an artist if we consider only single plays. He thought and

wrote in Trilogies. Sophocles, with whom it is usual to compare Æschylus, somewhat to the disadvantage of the latter, abandoned the large scale, the uncial letters, of the trilogy. Each separate Sophoclean drama is a studied whole. In order to do Æschylus the very barest justice, we ought therefore to contrast, not the *Agamemnon* alone, but the entire *Oresteia* with the *Œdipus* or the *Antigone*. It will then be seen that the one poet, designing colossi, gave to them the style and finish and the unity which suit a statue larger than life-size: the other, restricting himself within more narrow limits, was free to lavish labour on the slightest details of his model. Such elaboration, on the scale adopted by Æschylus, would have produced a bewildering and painful effect of complexity. The vast design which it was the artist's object to throw into the utmost possible relief, would inevitably have suffered from excess of finish.

Few dramatists have ventured, like Æschylus, to wield the chisel of a Titan, or to knead whole mountains into statues corresponding to the superhuman grandeur of their thought. Few indeed can have felt that this was their true province, that to this they had the thews and sinews adequate. He stands alone in his triumphant use of the large manner, and this solitude is prejudicial to his fame with students whose taste has been formed in the school of Sophocles. Surveying the long roll of illustrious tragedians, there is but one, until we come to Victor Hugo, in whom the Æschylean spirit found fresh incarnation: and he had fallen upon days disadvantageous to his full development; his life was cut short in its earliest bloom, and the conditions under which he had to work, obscure and outcast from society, were adverse to the highest production. This poet is our own Christopher Marlowe. Like Æschylus, Marlowe's imagination was at home in the illimitable; like Æschylus, he apprehended immaterial and elemental forces—lusts, ambitions, and audacities of soul—as though they were substantial entities, and gave them shape and form; like Æschylus, he was the

master of a "mighty line," the maker of a new celestial music for his race, the founder and creator of an art which ruled his century, the mystagogue of pomps and pageants and things terrible and things superb in shrines unvisited by earlier poets of his age and clime; like Æschylus, he stands arraigned of emptiness, extravagance, and "sound and fury," because the scale on which he wrought was vast, because he set no verbal limit to the presentation of the passion or the thought in view. Comparing Æschylus to Marlowe is comparing the monarch of the pine forest to the sapling fir, the full-grown lion to the lion's whelp, the achievement of the hero to the promise of the stripling. Yet Herakles in his cradle, when he strangled Hera's serpents, already revealed the firm hand and unflinching nerve of him who plucked the golden fruit of the Hesperides. Even so Marlowe's work betrays the style and spirit of a youthful Titan; it is the labour of a beardless Æschylus, the first-fruit of Apollo's laurel-bough untimely burned, the libation of a consecrated priest who, while a boy, already stood "chin-deep in the Pierian flood." If we contrast the *Supplices*, which Æschylus can hardly have written before the age at which Marlowe died, with *Tamburlaine*, which was certainly produced before Marlowe was twenty-six, the most immature work of the Greek with the most immature work of the English dramatist, we obtain a standard for estimating the height to which the author of *Faustus* might have grown if he had lived to write his *Oresteia* in the fulness of a vigorous maturity.

Much that has been described as Asiatic in the genius of Æschylus may be referred to what I have called his demiurgic force. No mere citation of Oriental similes will account for the impression of hugeness left upon our memory, for the images enormous as those of farthest Ind, yet shaped with true Hellenic symmetry, for the visions vast as those of Ezekiel, yet conveyed withal in rich and radiant Greek. The so-called Asiatic element in Æschylus was something which he held in common with the

poets and prophets of the East—a sense of life more mystic and more deep, a power to seize it and discover it more real and plastic than is often given to the nations of the West. This determination towards the hitherto invisible, unshaped, and unbelieved, to which he must give form, and for which he would fain win credence, may possibly help to explain the absence of human love as a main motive in his tragedies. There is plenty of Ares—too much, indeed, unless we recollect that the poet was a man of Marathon—but of Aphrodite nothing in his inspiration. It would seem that this passion, which formed the theme of Euripides' best work, and which Sophocles in the *Antigone* used to enhance the tragic situation brought about through the self-will of the heroine, had no attraction for Æschylus. Among the fragments of his plays there is, indeed, one passage in which he speaks of Love as a cosmical force, controlling the elemental powers of heaven and earth, and producing the flocks and fruits which sustain mortal life. The lines in question are put into the mouth of Aphrodite. The lost *Myrmidones*, again, described the love of Achilles for Patroclus, which Æschylus seems to have portrayed with a strength of passion that riveted the attention of antiquity. The plot of the *Supplices*, in like manner, implies the lawless desire of the sons of Ægyptus for the daughters of Danaus; and the adultery of Clytemnestra with Ægisthus lies in the background of the *Agamemnon*. But of love, in the more romantic modern sense of the word, we find no trace either in the complete plays or in the fragments of Æschylus. It lay, perhaps, too close at hand for him to care to choose it as the theme of tragic poetry; and, had he so selected it, he could hardly have avoided dwelling on its aberrations. The general feeling of the Greeks about love, as well as his own temper, would have made this necessary. It did not occur to the Greeks to separate love in its healthy and simple manifestations by any sharp line of demarcation from the other emotions of humanity. The brotherly,

filial, and wifely feelings—those which owe their ascendancy to use and to the sanctities of domestic life—appeared in their eyes more important than the affection of youth for maid unwedded. When love ceased to be the expression on the one side of a physical need, and on the other the binding tie that kept the family together, the Greeks regarded it as a disease, a madness. Plato, who treated it with seriousness, classed it among the μάναι. Euripides portrayed it as a god-sent curse on Phædra. Viewed in this light, it may be urged that the love of Zeus for Io, in the *Prometheus*, is an example of a passion which became an unbearable burden and source of misery to its victim; but of what we understand by love there is here in reality no question. The tale of Io rather resembles the survival of some mystic Oriental myth of incarnation.

The organic vitality which Æschylus, by the exercise of his creative power, communicated to the structure of his tragedies, is further noticeable in his power of conducting a drama without prologue and without narration. In Æschylus, the information that is necessary in order to place the spectators at the proper point of view is conveyed as part of the action. He does not, like Euripides, compose a formal and preliminary speech, or, like Shakspeare, introduce two or three superfluous characters in conversation. In this respect the openings of the *Prometheus*, the *Agamemnon*, and the *Eumenides* are masterpieces of the most consummate art. Not only are we plunged *in medias res*, without the slightest sacrifice of clearness; but the spectacle presented to our imagination is stirring in the highest degree. The fire has leapt from mountain peak to peak until at last it blazes on the watchman's eyes; Hephæstus and his satellites are actually engaged in nailing down the Titan to his bed of pain; the Furies are slumbering within the sacred Delphian shrine, and the ghost of Clytemnestra moves among them, rousing each in turn from her deep trance. Euripides, proceeding less by immediate vision than by patient thought, prefixed a

monologue, which contained a programme of preceding events, and prepared the spectator for what would follow in the play. These narratives are often frigid, and not unfrequently are placed, without propriety, in the mouth of one of the actors. We feel that a wholly detached prologue would have been more artistic.

The same is true about the speeches of the Messenger. The art of Æschylus was far too highly organised to be obliged to have recourse to such rude methods. It is true that, when he pleased, as in the *Persæ*, he gave the principal part to the Messenger. The actors in that play are little better than spectators; and the same might be said about the *Seven against Thebes*. But the Messenger, though employed as here for special purposes, was no integral part of his dramatic machinery; nor did he ever commit the decisive event of the drama to narration. His masterstroke as a dramatic poet—the cry of Agamemnon, following close upon the prophecies of Cassandra, and breaking the silence like a clap of doom, in that awful moment when the scene is left empty and the Chorus tremble with the apprehension of a coming woe—would probably have yielded in the hands of Euripides to the speech of a servant. It was not that the later poet would not willingly have employed every means in his power for stirring the emotions of his audience; but he had not the creative imagination of his predecessor; he could not grasp his subject as a whole so perfectly as to dispense with artificial and mechanical devices. He fell back, therefore, upon narrative, in which he was a supreme master.

Equally remarkable from this point of view is the Æschylean treatment of the Chorus. It is never really separated from the action of the play. In the *Prometheus*, for example, the Oceanidæ actually share the doom of the protagonist. In the *Supplices* the daughters of Danaus may be termed the protagonist; for upon them converges the whole interest of the drama. In the *Seven against Thebes* the participation of the Chorus in the fate of the chief actors is proved by half of them

siding with Ismene and the other half with Antigone at the conclusion. In the *Persæ* they represent the nation which has suffered through the folly of Xerxes. In the *Agamemnon* the elders of Mycenæ assume an attitude directly hostile to Ægisthus and Clytemnestra. In the *Choëphoræ* the women who sympathise with Electra, further the scheme of Orestes by putting Ægisthus off the track of danger and sending him unarmed to meet his murderers. In the *Eumenides* the Furies play a part at least equal in importance to that of Orestes. They, like the protagonist, stand before the judgment-seat of Pallas and accept the verdict of the Areiopagus. Thus, in each of the extant plays of Æschylus, even the Chorus, which was subsequently so far separated from the action as to become a mere commentator and spectator, is vitally important in the conduct of the drama. Euripides, by formalising the several elements of the tragic art, by detaching the Chorus, introducing a prologue, and expanding the functions of the Messenger, sacrificed that higher kind of unity which we admire in the harmonious working of complex parts. What he gained was the opportunity of concentrating attention upon the conflict of motives, occasions for the psychological analysis of character, and scope for ethical reflection and rhetorical description.

I have hitherto been occupied by what appear to me the essential features of the genius of Æschylus—its demiurgic faculty of creativeness, and its capacity of dealing with heroic rather than merely human forms. To pass to the consideration of his theology would at this point be natural and easy. I do not, however, wish to dwell on what is called the prophetic aspect of his tragedy at present. It is enough to say that, here, as in the sphere of pure art, he was in the truest sense creative. Without exactly removing the old landmarks, he elevated the current conception of Zeus regarded as the supreme deity, and introduced a novel life and depth of meaning into the moral fabric of the Greek religion. Much as he rejoiced in

the delineation of Titanic and primæval powers, he paid but slight attention to the minor gods of the Pantheon; his creed was monotheism detached upon a pantheistic background, to which the forms of polytheism gave variety and colour. Zeus was all in all for Æschylus far more than for his predecessors, Homer and Hesiod. The most remarkable point about the Æschylean theology is that, in spite of its originality, it seems to have but little affected the substance of serious Greek thought. Plato, for example, talks of Prometheus in the *Protagoras* as if no new conception of his character had been revealed to him by Æschylus. We are not, therefore, justified in regarding the dramatic poet as in any strict sense a prophet, and the oracles he uttered are chiefly valuable as indications of his own peculiar ways of thinking; nor ought we, even so, perhaps, to demand from Æschylus too much consistency. The *Supplices*, for instance, cannot without due reservation be used to illustrate the *Prometheus;* since the dramatic situation in the two tragedies is so different as to account for any apparent divergence of opinion.

There is, however, one point in the morality of Æschylus concerning fate and freewill which calls for special comment, since we run a danger here of doing real violence to his art by overstating some one theory about his supposed philosophical intention. I allude, of course, to his conception of Destiny. If we adopt the fatalistic explanation of Greek tragedy propounded by Schlegel, we can hardly avoid coarsening and demoralising fables which owe their interest not to the asphyxiating force of destiny, but to the action and passion of human beings. If, on the other hand, we overstrain the theological doctrine of Nemesis, we run a risk of trying to find sermons in works of art, and of exaggerating the importance of details which support our favourite hypothesis. It should never be forgotten that whatever view we take of the moral and religious purpose of Greek tragedy has been gained

by subsequent analysis. It was not in any case present to the consciousness of the poet as a necessary condition of his art as art. His first business was to provide for the dramatic presentation of his subject: his philosophy, whether ethical or theological, transpired in the heat and stress of production, not because he sought to give it deliberate expression, but because it formed an integral part of the fabric of his mind. Æschylus, in common with the Greeks of his age, firmly believed in the indissoluble connection between acts and consequences, and in the continuation of these consequences through successive generations. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," "the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge," formed the groundwork of his view of human life. This sort of fatalism he coloured with religious theories adopted from the antique theology of his race, but strongly moralised, and developed in the light of his own reason. The importance attributed by the Greeks to hereditary curses even in the common affairs of life, is proved by the familiar example of the proclamation by the Spartans against Pericles in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. Much of elder superstition, therefore, clings about his ethics, and an awful sense of guilt and doom attaches to acts in themselves apparently indifferent; nor can we fail to recognise a belief in fate as fate, τὸ πεπρωμένον, superior to all besides. The realm of tragic terror lies precisely in this borderland between inexorable reason and unreasoned fear. It has nothing to do with pure science or pure religion: they speak each for themselves, with their own voice; but it is not the voice of the dramatist. On the one hand, logical fatalism offers no freedom for the play of character, no turning-points of choice, no revolutions which may rouse our sympathy and stir us with the sense of self-determined ruin. On the other hand, theology, in its methodic form, supplies, indeed, the text of sermons, admonitions, and commandments, but not the subject-matter

for a work of art. Where the necessity of circumstance or the will of the Deity is paramount, human action sinks into insignificance; the canons of inevitable sequence and of obedience under pain of penalty supersede the casuistry of balanced motives, and the poet is swallowed up in the divine or the logician. Somewhere between the two, in the intermediate darkness, or μεταίχμιος σκότος, where all the ways of life are perilous, and where no clear light reveals the pitfalls of fate and the gins of religious duty, lies the track of the tragedian. His men and women are free; yet their action is overruled by destiny. They err against the law of heaven and flourish for a season; but the law pursues them and enacts its penalty. While terror and pity are stirred by the pervading sense of human helplessness, scope is still left for the exercise of the moral judgment; nor is the poet precluded from teaching his audience by precept and example. These remarks apply to the domestic curse which played so prominent a part in all Greek tragedy, and especially in the dramas of Æschylus. It was no mere avalanche of doom falling from above and crushing the innocent and the criminal alike; nor, again, can it justly be paralleled by what it most resembles, the taint of hereditary disease. It partook of the blind force of fate; it was propagated from generation to generation by laws analogous to those which govern madness; yet it contained another element, inasmuch as the transgression of each successive victim was a necessary condition of its prolongation. Sin alone, however, was not sufficient to establish its mysterious power; for all men are liable to offend against the divine law, and yet all families are not afflicted with a curse. In order to appreciate its nature, all these factors must be taken into account; their sum total, notwithstanding the exactitude of our calculation, remains within the realm of mystery. The undiscovered residuum, or rather the resolution of all these elements in a power which is all of them and more than all, is fate. Students

who are curious to appreciate the value attached by the Greeks themselves to the several elements implicit in the notion of domestic Até, should attentively peruse the longer of the two arguments to the *Seven against Thebes*, while the play itself sets forth more energetically than any other the terrible lesson of the Æschylean Nemesis. The protagonist Eteocles is a curse-intoxicated man, driven by the doom of his race and by the imprecations of his father on a dreadful shoal of fate. He walks open-eyed to meet his destiny—to slay his brother and be slain. Still, helpless as he seems, he is not innocent. His own rebellious and selfish nature, by rousing the fury of Œdipus, kindles afresh the smouldering flame of the ancestral Até. Thus the fate which overwhelms him is compounded of hereditary guilt, personal transgression, and the courage-quelling terror of a father's curse. But it is more than all this : it is an irresistible compelling force. He cannot avoid it, since action has been thrust upon him by the strength of circumstance. The tragic horror of his situation arises from the necessity under which he labours of going forward, though he knows that the next step leads to a bottomless abyss.

In estimating the characters of Æschylus what has already been said about his art in general must be taken into account. He was occupied with the task of exhibiting a great action, a δρᾶμα in the strictest sense of the Greek phrase; and this action was frequently so colossal in its relations as to preclude the niceties of merely personal character. Persons had to become types in order to play their part efficiently. The underlying moral and religious idea was blent with the æsthetic purpose of the poet, and penetrated with the interest pertaining to the clash of conflicting principles : the total effect produced sometimes seems to defy analysis of character in detail. The psychology of his chief characters is, therefore, inherent in their action, and is only calculable in connection with their momentary environments. We have to infer their specific quality

less from what they say than from their bearing and their conduct in the crisis of the drama. Only after profound study of the situation of each tragedy, after steeping our imagination in the elementary conditions selected by the poet, can we realise the fulness of their individuality. In this respect Æschylus resembles Homer. Like Homer, he repeats the work of nature, and creates men and women entire. He does not strive to lay bare the conscious workings of the mind piecemeal. He has none of the long speeches on which Euripides relied for setting forth the flux and reflux of contending motives, or for making clear the attitude adopted by his *dramatis personæ*. There is no revelation of the anatomical method in his art; nor, again, can we detect the *ars celandi artem* to which poets of a more reflective age are forced to have recourse. Everything with Æschylus is organic; each part is subordinated to the whole which pre-existed in his mind, and which has been evolved in its essential unity from his imagination. Even the weighty sentences and gnomic judgments upon human affairs, uttered by his actors, are necessitated by the straits in which they find themselves. Severed from their context, they lose half their value; whereas the similar reflections in Euripides may be detached without injury, and read like extracts from a common-place-book. Perhaps sufficient stress has not been laid by critics upon this quality of absolute creativeness, which distinguishes the Homeric, Æschylean, and Shakspearean poets from those who proceed from mental analysis to artistic presentation. It is easy to render an account of characters that have first been thought out as ethical specimens and then provided with a suitable exterior. It is very difficult to dissect those which started into being by an act of intuitive invention, and which, dissociated from the texture of circumstance woven round them, appear at first sight to elude our intellectual grasp. Yet the latter are found in the long run to be cast in the more vital mould. Once apprehended, they

haunt the memory like real persons, and we may fancy, if we choose, innumerable series of events through which they would maintain their individuality intact. They are, in fact, living creatures, and not puppets of the poet's brain.

Of the characters of Æschylus, those which have been wrought with the greatest care, and which leave the most profound impression on the memory, are Clytemnestra and Prometheus. Considering how slight were the outlines of the Homeric picture of Clytemnestra, it may be said that Æschylus created her. What is still more remarkable than his creation of Clytemnestra, is that he should have realised her far more vividly than any of the men whom he has drawn. This proves that Æschylus, at least among the Attic Greeks, gave a full share to women in the affairs of the great world of public action. As a woman, she stands outside the decencies and duties of womanhood, supporting herself by the sole strength of her powerful nature and indomitable will. The self-sufficingness of Clytemnestra is the main point in her portrait. Her force of character is revealed by the sustained repression of her real feelings and the concealment of her murderous purpose, which enable her to compass Agamemnon's death. During the critical moments when she receives her husband in state, and leads him to the bath within the palace, she remains calm and collected. The deed that she has plotted must, if ever, be done at once. A single word from the Chorus, who are aware of her relations to Ægisthus, would spoil all her preparations. Yet she shows no fear, and can command the fairest flowers of rhetoric to greet the king with feigned congratulations. The same strength is displayed in her treatment of Cassandra, on whom she wastes no words, expends no irritable energy, although she hates and has the mind to murder her. Studied craft and cold disdain mark her bearing at the supreme crisis. When the death-blow has been given to Agamemnon, she breathes freely; her language reveals the

exhilaration of one who expands his lungs and opens wide his nostrils to snuff the elastic air of liberty. The blood upon her raiment is as pleasant to her as a shower of rain on thirsty corn-fields; she shouts like soldiers when the foemen turn to fly. Æschylus has sustained the impression of her force of character by the radiant speech with which he gifts her. This splendour of rhetoric belongs by nature to the magnificent and lawless woman, who rejoices in her shame. It is like the superb colours of a venomous lily. The contrast between the serpent-coils of her sophistic speech to Agamemnon at the palace-gate and the short sentences in which she describes his murder—true tiger-leaps of utterance—is a triumph of dramatic art. As regards her motive for killing the king, I see no reason to suppose that Æschylus intended to diverge from the Homeric tradition. Clytemnestra has lived in adultery with Ægisthus; she dares not face a public discovery of her fault, nor is she willing to forego her paramour. The passage in the *Choëphoræ*, where she argues with Orestes before her own murder, proves that she has no other valid reason to set forth. Her son tells her she shall be slain and laid by the side of Ægisthus, seeing that in life she preferred him to her lord. All her answer is: "Child, in your father's absence I was sorely tried." The same is clear from the allusions in the *Agamemnon* to the nerveless lion, who tumbles in the royal couch, and is a sorry housekeeper for the departed king. Æschylus, however, with the instinct of a great poet, has not suffered our minds to dwell wholly upon this adulterous motive. He makes Clytemnestra put forth other pleas, and intends us to believe in their validity, as lending her self-confidence in the commission of her crime, and as suggesting reasons for our sympathy. Revenge for Iphigeneia's sacrifice, the superstitious sense of the Erinnys of the house of Atreus, jealousy of Chryseis and Cassandra, mingle with the master impulse in her mind, and furnish her with specious arguments. The solidity of Clytemnestra's

character is impressed upon us with a force and a reality of presentation that have never been surpassed. She maintains the same *aplomb*, the same cold glittering energy of speech, the same presence of mind and unswerving firmness of nerve, whether she bandies words of bitter irony with the Chorus, or ceremoniously receives the king, or curls the lip of scorn at Cassandra, or defies the Argives after Agamemnon's death. She loves power, and despises show. When the deed is done, and fair words are no longer needed, her hypocrisy is cast aside. At the same time she defends herself with a moral impudence which is only equalled by her intellectual skill, and rises at last to the sublimity of arrogance when she asserts her right to be regarded as the incarnate dæmon of the house. Clytemnestra has been frequently compared to Lady Macbeth; nor is it easy to think of the one without being reminded of the other. Clytemnestra, however, is a less elastic character than Lady Macbeth: she is cast in metal of a tougher temper, and the springs which move her are more simple. Lady Macbeth has not in reality so much force and fibre: she does not design Duncan's death many months beforehand; she acts from overmastering impulse under the temptation of opportunity, and when her husband and herself are sunk chin-deep in blood she cannot bear the load of guilt upon her conscience. Shakspeare has conceived and analysed a woman more sensitive, and therefore more liable to nervous failure, than Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra never breaks down. Her sin feeds and nourishes her nature, instead of starving and palsying it; her soul grows fat and prospers, nor does she know what conscience means. She is never more imposing in her pride of intellectual strength than when she receives the feigned news of Orestes' death. Just as the superior nature of Lady Macbeth is enhanced by contrast with her weaker husband, so Clytemnestra appears to the greatest advantage by the side of Ægisthus. Ægisthus in the last scene of the *Agamemnon*

brags and blusters: Clytemnestra utters no superfluous syllable. Ægisthus insults the corpse of the king; Clytemnestra is satisfied with having slain him. Nothing shakes her courage or weakens her determination. When Orestes turns his sword against her in the *Choëphoræ* her first impulse is to call aloud: "Reach me with all speed an axe of weight to tire a man, that we may know at once the issue of this combat." She will measure weapons with her son. And when his blade is already at her breasts, she has the nerve to bare them and exclaim: "My son, behold where thou didst lie; these nipples gave thee milk." There is no groaning in her last life-struggle. She dies, as she lived, self-sustained and equal to all emergencies. This terrible personality endures even in the grave. When she rises in the *Eumenides*, a ghost from Hades, it is with bitter taunts and a most biting tongue that she stirs up the Furies to revenge. If we are to seek a parallel for Clytemnestra in our own dramatic literature, I should be inclined to look for it in the *Vittoria Corrombona* of Webster. The modern poet has not developed his "white devil of Italy" with the care that Æschylus bestowed on Clytemnestra. Her portrait remains a sketch rather than a finished picture; and the circumstances of her tragedy are infinitely less impressive than those which place the Queen of Mycenæ on so eminent a pinnacle of crime. But Vittoria is cast in the same mould. Like Clytemnestra, she has the fascination and the force of sin, self-satisfied and self-contained to face the world with brazen arrogance, and browbeat truth before the judgment-seat of gods or men.

Of all the masterpieces of Greek tragedy which have been preserved to us, the *Prometheus* of Æschylus presents by far the greatest difficulty, and involves at the same time by far the most enticing problems. Its paramount interest lies in the fact that the dramatic action is removed beyond and above the sphere of humanity, and that the poet, who was also the chief

prophet of Hellas in the very prime of Athenian culture, is dealing with the mystery of God's relation to the world and man. In the trilogy of the *Oresteia* he is concerned with heroes; in the *Prometheus* with gods, Titans, and demigods. The *dramatis personæ* are Prometheus, Hephæstus and his comrade Force, Hermes, the herald of Zeus, Io, the victim of the love of Zeus, and Oceanus, the ruler of the streams and seas. The Chorus is composed of Oceanides, the maiden daughters of the deep, cloud-bearing dews and mists, who gather round the Scythian crags, where Prometheus lies, chained, and exposed to fiery heat by day and freezing cold by night. The only mortal who visits him is Io; and she bears within her the child of Zeus. Thus everything in the tragedy is conceived upon a vast and visionary scale. It is no episode of real or legendary history which forms the subject-matter of the play. The powers of heaven and earth are in action. The destinies of Olympian Zeus and of the whole human race are at stake. In this lofty region of the imagination the genius of Æschylus moves freely. The scenery of his drama is in harmony with its stupendous subject. Barren mountain summits, the sea outspread beneath, the sky with all its stars above, silently falling snowflakes and tempestuous winds, thunder, and earthquake, and riven precipices, are the images which crowd upon the mind. In like manner the duration of time is indefinitely extended. Not years, but centuries, measure the continuance of the struggle between the sovereign will of Zeus and the stubborn resistance of the Titan.

At the opening of the play Prometheus appears in the midst of the desert which is destined for his prison-home. Hephæstus and his satellites chain him down with adamantine rivets, so that he may neither bend the knee nor rest in slumber, but must cling, crucified in wakeful torment, to the unyielding rock. While they are at their work, Prometheus utters not a word or groan. He is gifted with unerring foresight, and

knows surely that his doom must be borne, and also that his doom must have an end. He defies the power of Zeus in frigid silence—not sullenly, because, when sympathy has loosed his lips, he proves that a warm heart beats within his breast—but proudly and indignantly. Hephæstus and Titanic Force leave him alone in his misery, when their task is finished. Then at last he speaks. It is to the kindred powers of elemental nature, to the Sun and Sea and nourishing Earth, his brethren and his mother, that he addresses his complaint: "See you how I, a god, suffer at the hands of God; and for what crime? —*for having given fire to mortal man.*"

This, then, is the sin of Prometheus. He found humanity abject and forsaken by the gods. Zeus, who had recently seized upon the empire of the universe, designed to extirpate men from the world, and to create a new race after his own heart. Prometheus took pity upon them, saved them from destruction, gifted them with fire, the mother of all arts, taught them carpentry and husbandry, revealed to them the stars, whereby they knew the order of the seasons and recurrences of crops, instructed them in letters, showed them how to tame the horse and ox, and how to plough the sea with ships, then taught them medicine and the cure of wounds, then divination and the sacrifice of victims to propitiate the gods, and lastly how to smelt the ore contained within the bowels of the earth. All these good things Prometheus gave to men. And here, in passing, we may notice how accurately Æschylus has sketched the primitive conditions of mankind in its emergence from the state of savagery. The picture is indeed poetical; but subsequent knowledge has only strengthened the outlines and filled them in with details, not altered or erased them.

Now, however, we ask, In what true sense was Prometheus criminal? What right had Zeus, who is invariably represented by Æschylus in all his other dramas as a just and wise ruler, to impose these trials on the benefactor of the human race?

Æschylus, in this play, clearly desires to rouse our sympathy for Prometheus. He makes all the principal actors speak of Zeus as a forceful tyrant, newly come to power, which he abuses for his selfish ends, subverting the old order of the world, oppressing the old powers, who are his kindred, yet substituting nothing but his own ill-regulated and capricious will. On the other hand, Æschylus has indicated that Prometheus is in the wrong; that he regards his disobedience to Zeus as the cause of merited punishment. The Chorus points this moral by asserting, in spite of their tender feeling for the Titan, that they only are sane and righteous who bow to necessity and accept the law of their superior. Oceanus in like manner advises his kinsman to submit; and reminds him that, though the rule of Zeus is a novelty, it is not intolerable, and that acquiescence is always prudent.

The chief difficulty of the play consists, therefore, in understanding the error of the protagonist, and in reconciling the character of Zeus, as here depicted, with the theology elsewhere expressed by Æschylus. The most probable solution of the problem is suggested by the ideal to which Greek tragedy aspired. It was the object of the Athenian dramatists not to represent a simple study of character, or to set forth a merely stirring action, but to depict a hero worthy of all respect and admirable, exposed to suffering or ruin by some fault of temperament. We are probably meant to look upon Prometheus as having erred, though nobly, through self-will, because he would not obey the ruler of the world for the time being, nor abide the working out of the law of fate in patience, but tried to take that law into his own hands, and to anticipate the evolution of events. At the same time the play seems to convict supreme Zeus himself of a tyrannical exercise of a forcefully acquired power; he also, through a like self-will, appears to be kicking against the pricks of immutable destiny; and it is prophesied that in his turn he will be superseded by a more

righteous ruler. The secret of the revolution in Olympus, whereby Zeus will be deposed, is possessed by Prometheus and withheld by him from his tormentor. Thus the knowledge of the future enables the hero of the drama to endure, while Zeus upon his throne suffers through the consciousness that fate cannot be resisted. Therefore the *Prometheus*, as we possess it, presents the spectacle of two stubborn wills in conflict. The action is suspended. The conclusion cannot be foreseen. Owing to its very excellence as a work of art, it contains no indication of the ultimate solution; we are only told by Prometheus that, after he has been liberated, and not till then, he may reveal the means by which the ruin of Zeus shall be averted. We are left to conjecture that Æschylus intended to harmonise the wills of the Titan and his oppressor through the final submission of both alike to the laws of destiny which are supreme. Prometheus, when once his pride has given way, will reveal the secret which he holds, and Zeus, made acquiescent by the lapse of time, will accept it.

The chief obstacle to the satisfactory interpretation of the *Prometheus* springs, as I have hinted, from the difficulty of understanding how Prometheus was guilty and Zeus justified. The transgression of the hero, if it deserves the name at all, was eminently noble. His punishment appears extravagant in its severity. At first sight we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the final alliance between the two conflicting actors in this drama was a kind of political compromise, unworthy of the protagonist. To this judgment Shelley was led by his hatred of despotism, and by his inability to imagine a dignified termination to the dispute that enlisted his sympathies so strongly on the side of the disinterested hero. "I was averse," he says in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, "from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Pro-

metheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." Those, however, who have learned to respect the lofty theosophy of Æschylus, no less than to admire his imperial artistic faculty, will be slow to accept the conclusion of Shelley, or to believe that the catastrophe prepared by the Greek poet was feeble. They will rather mistrust their powers of judgment, or suspect that the key to the riddle has been lost. The truth is, that we have no means of settling what the catastrophe really was; and at this point it is necessary to give some account of the relation of this drama to the entire scheme of Æschylus.

The *Prometheus Bound* (δεσμώτης) was probably the second of a trilogy, or series of three tragedies, of which the first was called *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* (πυρφόρος), and the third *Prometheus Unbound* (λυόμενος). *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* and *Prometheus Unbound* have disappeared; it seems that they were not even known to the Greek scholiast, for he does not mention them in his argument to the *Prometheus Bound.* At the same time the argument prefixed to the *Persæ* informs us that that play was the second in a series, of which the *Phineus* was first, the *Glaucus Potnieus* third, and a so-called *Prometheus* fourth. It has been conjectured that the *Prometheus,* which formed the fourth or satyric drama in this tetralogy, was distinguished by the title *Fire-kindler* (πυρκαεύς), a name which is mentioned in an obscure passage of Pollux; and that consequently four plays altogether by Æschylus bore the title of *Prometheus.* It cannot, however, be proved beyond doubt that the *Fire-kindler* existed independent of the *Fire-bearer;* or, if so, that the former was the last play in the tetralogy of the *Persæ,* the latter the first in the trilogy of the *Prometheus Bound.* Both arguments to the only *Prometheus* we possess entire are unfortunately silent about the plays which accompanied it; and it is only from allusions to a lost tragedy called *Prometheus Un-*

bound that we are at all justified in assuming the disappearance of the first drama of the series, and in calling it the *Fire-bearer*. It should be added that the learned editor of the Greek Scenic Poets is inclined to identify the *Fire-bearer* and the *Fire-kindler*, and to regard this play as the satyric drama attached to the tetralogy of the *Persæ*. By so doing he leaves the *Prometheus Bound* and *Unbound* without a proper dramatic introduction.

In spite of the uncertainty which surrounds the criticism of this play, no students familiar with the style of Æschylus will fail to recognise in the *Prometheus Unbound* the second drama of a trilogy. It has the stationary character which belongs to the *Choëphoræ*, the *Persæ*, and the *Supplices*. The dramatic action is not helped forward in these second pieces; they develop the situation to which affairs have been brought by the events of a previous drama, and which in its turn must lead to the conclusive action of the third piece. It was only in this way that a series of three dramas on the same subject could be connected into true artistic unity. The catastrophe of the first play produced a combination of events, which required such expansion in a second that a new action, involving a final catastrophe, should be unfolded in the third, and the whole series should in the end be seen to have coherence. Now the *Prometheus Unbound* is unintelligible, except as the result of a preceding action, while its conclusion leaves the fate of the hero still undetermined: the events which brought the hero to his dreadful doom, and the events which will deliver him, are alluded to as things of the past and of the future; in the present there is no drama, no doing, but only a development of the intermediate and transitional situation. We have, therefore, the right to assume the antecedence of a play which must, according to the data given in our extant tragedy, have turned upon the hero's theft of fire.*

* See line 107.

We may now attempt to reconstruct the whole trilogy, and see if, having done so, any new conditions are supplied for the solution of the difficulty as originally stated. In the *Fire-bearer*, for the subject-matter of which we have to rely on the allusions of the *Bound*, Zeus has recently acquired the empire of the universe by imprisoning his father Cronos, and by defeating the giants who rose up in arms against him. Prometheus, knowing, through the inspiration of his mother Earth, or Themis, that Zeus will prevail, has taken his side, and has materially helped him in the conflict. But the sympathies of Prometheus are less with Zeus than with the race of men who, at that primitive period of the world's history, existed in the lowest state of wretchedness. Zeus, intent on getting his new kingdom into order, entertains the notion of destroying mankind, and planting a better stock of mortal beings on the earth. Prometheus opposes this design, and enables men to raise themselves above their savage condition into comparative power and comfort. It is just at this point that the lost drama would probably have revealed the true nature of his offence, or ἁμαρτία. In the Hesiodic legend he is punished for having taught men to deceive the powers of heaven; and though it is clear that Æschylus did not closely follow that version of the myth, we may conjecture that he represented the benefactor of humanity as a rebel against the ruler of Olympus. Against the express command of Zeus Prometheus gave men fire; and though this act seems innocent enough, we must remember that, according to Genesis, Adam lost Eden by merely plucking an apple. Satisfied with his own sense of justice, and hardened in his pride by the foreknowledge of the future, Prometheus resisted a power that he regarded as tyrannical, and had to be treated by Zeus with the same severity as Atlas or Typhœus.

In the *Prometheus Bound* we see the beginning of his punishment. The Titan, in whose person, as it were, the whole

race of mortals suffer, is crucified on a barren cliff of Scythia. Meanwhile he makes two prophecies—first, that a descendant of Io is destined to deliver him; and, secondly, that Zeus will marry and beget a son, who shall sway the universe in his place. At the same time he declares that he knows how Zeus may avoid this danger. Zeus, anxious to possess this secret, sends down Hermes, and endeavours to wrest it from his prisoner with threats; but Prometheus abides, scornful and unyielding; his pain may be increased, yet it cannot last for ever; he is immortal, and Zeus will in the end be humiliated. To requite his contumacy, Zeus rends the mountains, hell is opened, and Prometheus descends to the lowest pit of Tartarus.

It is clear that, whatever may have been the fault of Prometheus in the *Fire-bearer*, the poet has done all in his power to excite our sympathy for him in the second drama of the trilogy. He draws the character of Oceanus as a trimmer and time-server, who inspires contempt. He introduces Io suffering as a wretched victim of the selfish love of her almighty master. He makes the Oceanides willing in the end to share the doom of the Titan; while all the human sympathies of the audience are powerfully affected by the spectacle of a martyrdom incurred for their sake. This play is, therefore, the triumph of the protagonist; his offence is hidden; his heroic resistance is idealised; we are made to feel sure that, when at last he is reconciled with Zeus, it will be through no unworthy weakness on his part.

In the third drama of the trilogy, parts of which, translated into Latin by Cicero, have been preserved to us, Prometheus has been raised from Tartarus, and is again crucified on Caucasus. A vulture sent by Zeus daily gnaws his liver, which daily growing, supplies continually fresh food for the tormentor. The tension of the situation is still protracted. Prometheus has not given way. Zeus has not relented. Meanwhile the seasons have revolved through thirteen genera-

tions of the race of men, and the deliverer appears. It is Herakles who cuts the Gordian knot. He destroys the vulture, and persuades his father Zeus to suffer Cheiron, the Centaur, whom he had smitten with a poisoned arrow, and who is weary of continued life, to take the place of the Titan in Hades. Then Prometheus is liberated. He declares that Zeus, if he would avoid the coming doom, must refrain from marriage with Thetis. He binds the willow of repentance round his forehead, and places the iron ring of necessity upon his finger. His will is made at last concordant with that of his enemy. Thetis is given in wedlock to the mortal Peleus, and Achilles is born.*

From this last drama of the trilogy it would appear that the honours of the whole series were reserved for Herakles. Herakles is the offspring of Zeus by a mortal woman. He occupies, therefore, a middle place between the two contending parties, and is able to effect their reconciliation. We may fairly conclude that herein lay the solution designed by Æschylus. In order to mediate between Zeus and Prometheus, a third agency was imperatively demanded. The heroic demigod, who is the son of the Olympian, and at the same time a scion of oppressed humanity, prompted by no decree of his father; but following the instincts of his generous humanity, will not allow the torments of Prometheus to continue. By killing the vulture, he resolves the justice of Zeus in an act of mercy; at the same time, he touches the heart of the Titan, and draws his secret from him, working a revolution in the stubborn nature of Prometheus similar to that which Neoptolemus effected in Philoctetes by his humane uprightness. It is thoroughly in accordance with the spirit of Greek tragedy that the scales should thus have fallen from the eyes of Prome-

* It should be said that the subject-matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* has to be gathered partly from fragments of the play, partly from prophecies in the *Prometheus Bound*, and partly from later versions of the legend.

theus. He saw at last that Zeus, though severe, was really justified; and, as a makepeace-offering, he rendered up the secret which brought the ruler into harmony with the immutable laws of fate. According to this solution of the plot the final concession of Prometheus would have been as noble as his intermediate resistance; the περιπέτεια, or revolution, which was imperatively required before the drama could have been conducted to an issue, would have taken place within the protagonist's soul, while Herakles, by introducing a new element into the action, furnished the efficient cause of its conclusion. It may be argued on the other hand that Prometheus foreknew the advent of Herakles, and prophesied of him to Io in the second drama of the trilogy. To this I should answer that he could not then have calculated on the change which would be wrought in his own character by the deliverer.

How Æschylus handled the subject-matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* we cannot say. It seems, however, certain that, unless he falsified his otherwise consistent conception of Zeus, as the just and wise, though stern, lord of the universe, and unless he satisfied himself with a catastrophe which Shelley would have been justified in calling "feeble," he must, through Herakles, have introduced a factor capable of solving the problem, by revealing to Prometheus the nature of his original ἁμαρτία, and thus rendering it dignified for him to bow to Zeus.

If this reading of the *Prometheus* be accepted, it will be seen that the whole trilogy involved the deepest interests, the mightiest collision of wills, the most pathetic situations, and the most sublime of reconciliations. Zeus, in the second drama of the series, is purposely exposed to misrepresentation in order that his true character in the climax as

> τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώσαντα, τὸν πάθη μάθος
> θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν*

* "Him who leads men in the ways of wisdom, who has ordained that suffering should teach."

may be established. The divine justice personified in Zeus is displayed irreconcilably opposed to the natural will personified in Prometheus, until the hero who partakes of both, the active and unselfish Herakles, atones them. We are even justified in conjecturing that, as Prometheus occupied the foreground of the second drama, so Zeus must have been paramount in the first, and that the two antithetical propositions having thus been stated, the chief part of the third play was assigned to Herakles. What strengthens the interpretation now advanced is the peculiar nature of the punishment of Prometheus. The liver, according to antique psychology, was the seat of the passions; consequently Prometheus suffered through the organ of his sin.

That Æschylus intended to describe the protagonist of his trilogy as a transgressor, though offending in a noble cause, while Zeus was acting in accordance with real justice, however hard to comprehend, is further indicated by the series of events which are supposed to have taken place between the termination of the *Fire-bearer* and the climax of the *Unbound*. All this while Prometheus in his obstinacy is suffering on Caucasus and in the depth of Tartarus; but the way of salvation is meantime being wrought out on earth. By the commerce of the Olympian deities with the daughters of men the heroic race is generated; and not only is the deliverer and reconciler, Herakles, sent forth to purge the world of monstrous wrong, but the better age of equity and justice, foreseen by the Titan and ordained by the Fates, is being prepared. The marriage of Thetis to Peleus is the proper inauguration of the heroic age; it not only confirms Zeus in his sovereignty, but it also provides for humanity the greatest actor in the drama of the Trojan war—the first historical event of Hellas.

If the character ascribed to Zeus in the *Prometheus Bound* still seems to offer difficulties; if, in other words, we are not

satisfied with assuming that his conduct must have been justified by the evolution of events in the *Prometheus Unbound*, the following considerations may be adduced by way of further explanation. In the first place, at the supposed time of the *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus was but just seated on his throne, and had to deal with unruly and insurgent powers. The punishment of Prometheus was an episode in the Titanomachy. It was the business, therefore, of Æschylus to exhibit the firmness and force of government of the new ruler, not to draw the picture of a kind paternal monarch. In the second place, the speakers who describe Zeus as despotic, belonged by kinship to the old order of the Titans, or were closely related through friendship to Prometheus. Dramatic propriety required that they should calumniate the new king, or at least misunderstand his motives. In the third place, Io, whose fate appeared so hard, became the mother of a mighty nation, and received tenfold for all her sufferings at the hand of Zeus.* Here, therefore, his inscrutable ways were in the end proved righteous; nor is it probable that if Æschylus justified Zeus in his dealings with the unoffending Io, he would leave his treatment of Prometheus unexplained. In the fourth place, the theology of the Greeks was not absolute, like that to which we are accustomed through Christianity. The power ascribed to their deities was political and economical. Fate and necessity determined the action of even Zeus, who was himself an outgrowth from an earlier and ruder order. They also imagined a gradual development in the moral order of the universe. The intellectual powers of Olympus had superseded the old nature-forces of the Titanic cosmogony. There was, therefore, nothing ridiculous to the Greek mind in the notion that Zeus might be conceived as growing in wisdom and in righteousness. In the fifth place, we must remember that the Athenian audience, familiar with the Hesiodic legend of

* See *Supplices*, 524 599.

Prometheus, were better prepared than we are, after listening to the invectives against Zeus in the second drama of the trilogy, to accept his triumphant justification in the third.

Not only is the trilogy of Æschylus—if, indeed, he composed a Promethean trilogy at all—now irrecoverable except by hazardous conjecture, but what is more unfortunate, the whole mythus on which it was based has descended to us in hopelessly mutilated fragments. We can clearly perceive that it enshrined the deepest speculations of the Greeks concerning the origin of humanity, the relation of deified intelligence to material nature and to abstract necessity, the kinship between the human soul and the divine spirit, and the consciousness of sin, which implies a division between the will and the reason. Furthermore, there are hints implied in it of purification through punishment, of ultimate reconciliation, and of vicarious suffering. But the fabric of the legend is so ruined that to reconstruct these elements of a theological morality is now impossible. Moreover, the very conditions under which the mythus flourished, tended to divert the minds of the Greeks themselves away from the underlying meaning to the romantic presentation. The story could not fail to usurp upon the doctrine. Like the Glaucus of Greek mythology, whom Plato used as a parable in the *Republic*, the idea which takes shape in a legend during the first ages of human speculation, gathers an accretion of the sea-weeds and the shells of fancy round it, lying at the bottom of the ocean of the human mind through centuries, so that, when it emerges into the light of critical inquiry, the original lineaments of the conception are deformed and overgrown, and to strip it bare and see it clearly is no easy matter. Far more difficult is the task when only the maimed fragments, the *disjecta membra*, of the myth remain to us.

However freely Æschylus may have dealt with the tale of Prometheus, however he may have employed it as a vehicle for rational theology, he cannot have wholly eliminated those

qualities which belonged to it as a Saga rather than a chapter of religious tradition. Indeed, by dramatising, he was probably impelled to accentuate the legendary outline at the expense of philosophical coherence. This consideration may explain some of the apparent incongruities in his fable, to which attention has not been yet directed in this essay. One of these concerns the position of the human race between Zeus, their apparent oppressor, and Prometheus, their avowed champion. It was for the sake of mankind that Prometheus disobeyed Zeus; it was through severity towards mankind that Zeus placed himself at variance with justice. Yet we find Zeus seeking a mortal bride among the daughters of the men he had sought to destroy; nor is there any reason why, when he could crucify their champion, he should not have annihilated the whole race outright. Perhaps, however, we ought to conjecture that, at this point, the episode of Deucalion and his restoration of mankind after the deluge was understood to have intervened.

Other discrepancies may be stated briefly. In the elder version of the fable presented by Hesiod, Prometheus is almost identified with humanity, while some later fragments of the legend make him the father of Deucalion. In Æschylus he is an immortal god, whose sympathy with men proceeds from generosity and pity. Hesiod describes him as the son of the Titan Iapetos by Asia. Æschylus places him in the first rank of Titanic agencies, by making him the son of Earth or Themis; he is married to Hesione, daughter of Oceanus. Hesiod names his brother Epimetheus; and herein we trace the remnants of an antique psychological analysis, whereof Æschylus has made no use. It is clear, therefore, that the Attic poet dealt freely with the mythus, selecting for artistic purposes only such points in the Hellenic fable as would fit the framework of his drama.

The only sure ground, amid so much that is both shifting

and uncertain, is that the race of men had sinned against God, and that Prometheus was a responsible co-agent in their crime. This in itself is a strong argument in favour of the view which has been urged throughout this essay. This view may be resumed in the following positions. First, it is probable that the *Prometheus Bound* is only the second drama of a trilogy. Secondly, the vilification of Zeus as a despot must be understood in a dramatic sense; it was appropriate to the situation of the actors, and intended to enhance the pathos of the protagonist's suffering. Thirdly, if we possessed the trilogy entire, we should see that Prometheus had been really and gravely in the wrong, and that his obstinacy was in the highest sense tragic according to the Greek conception, inasmuch as it displayed the aberration of a sublime character. Fourthly, the occasion of a worthy reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, wherein the former should forego his anger and the latter bend the proud neck of his will, was furnished by Herakles, who held an intermediate position between God and men, and who was recognised as the redresser of wrongs and saviour by the Greeks at large.

The Trilogy of the *Oresteia* is at the same time the masterpiece of Æschylus as a dramatic poet, and also the surest source that we possess for forming a theory of his theological opinions. I do not propose to consider it from the second of these points of view, but rather to concentrate attention upon its greatness as a connected poem in three stupendous parts—as "the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies." In the *Oresteia* Æschylus has plucked the last fruit upon the Upas-tree of crime which flourished in the palace of Mycenæ. The murder of Agamemnon, after his return in pomp and power from Troy, forms the subject of the first play. By selecting this point for the overture to

the series, the poet was able to allude in choric songs to the ancestral curse of the house, and also to the special crimes of Agamemnon, in his sacrifice of Iphigeneia, in the protracted sufferings of the Argives before Troy, and in his fatal pride. The vaticinations of Cassandra opened a terrific vista of the horrors accumulated upon the family of Thyestes. Thus the past was connected with the present, and the intolerable account of guilt which Orestes, the chief actor, was destined in the end, by the help of Heaven, to discharge, was vividly presented to the minds of the audience. Agamemnon is murdered, and the tragedy closes with Clytemnestra's pæan of triumph and defiance. She glories in her act, pretending that she has duly revenged the death of Iphigeneia, and suppressing her own adultery with Ægisthus—a criminal motive more than enough to vitiate its character of retributive justice.

The Chorus, who are hostile to her and her paramour, call upon her, if she really slew her husband for Iphigeneia's sake, to leave the palace and seek purification. This was her duty according to Greek etiquette. But she refuses; and no Furies haunt her for her crime, seeing that the Furies take account of none but kindred blood, and Clytemnestra killed a man who was no relative by birth, but only by marriage. Such is the strange doctrine which the Eumenides themselves, in the third play of the series, propound before the judgment-seat of Pallas. In a deeper sense it was artistically fitting that Clytemnestra should remain unvisited by the dread goddesses. They were the deities of remorse, and she had steeled her soul against the stings of conscience. Neither from the blood of a slain husband could they rise; nor was there in her own heart harbourage for their grim choir. But though Clytemnestra escaped the spiritual visitings of the Erinnyes, she knew what fear was. Orestes, as the Chorus told her, was still living.

The *Choëphoræ* continues the tale of blood and vengeance.

Orestes returns to Mycenæ. He recognises his sister Electra by their father's tomb, deludes Clytemnestra with a false tale of his own death, and then succeeds in killing her together with Ægisthus on the spot where they had murdered Agamemnon. Once more the palace is thrown open; instead of Agamemnon and Cassandra, Clytemnestra and Ægisthus lie prostrate before the desecrated altars, and Orestes exhibits to the Argives the robe in which his father had been caught and tangled ere the axe descended on his head. Then, when the song of joy is rising from Electra and the Chorus, while they are crying that the ancient Fury of the house has been appeased, at that very moment the eyes of Orestes dilate with horror, his hair bristles, and he trembles with madness. He sees what none around him may discern. The Erinnyes of his mother are upon him, and he flies. Like all the middle plays of a trilogy, the *Choëphoræ* is somewhat stationary in its action. But this closing scene is tremendous. It powerfully affected the imagination of the Greeks, and continued, through the period of Græco-Roman art, to form a favourite subject for sepulchral bas-reliefs. Some of these have been preserved to us, the finest being one in the Capitoline Museum.

By the termination of the *Choëphoræ* we are prepared for yet another tragedy, the last of the series. The *Eumenides* opens with a scene which represents the temple of Phœbus at Delphi. Orestes has taken refuge with the god who bade him slay his mother, and who must now purify him. He lies breathless at the altar-steps, with the branch of suppliant wool-enwoven olive in his hand. Not far away are stretched the Furies, hideous, and snorting in their slumber. Phœbus, while they yet sleep, bids his client rise and speed to Athens, to await the verdict of Pallas in his case. So much we learn, partly from the speech of the Pythia, and partly from the lips of the god himself. Then, when Orestes has started on his

way, the phantom of Clytemnestra appears and bids the sleeping Furies rise. One by one they start, and groan like hounds disturbed in the midst of dreamings of the chase. When they see their prey has escaped, they break into full cry—a brazen-throated chorus, accompanied by brazen-footed tramplings. Phœbus, however, drives them forth with scorn from his sun-bright shrine. Why linger they in those hypæthral temple-chambers, resonant with song, and gladdened by the feet of youths and maidens bearing bays? Their haunts should rather be the charnel-house, the shambles, the gallows, the torture-chamber of barbarians. The scene is now changed to Athens, where Pallas presides over the court of the Areiopagus assembled to decide between the Furies who prosecute Orestes, and Phœbus who defends his suppliant. There is no doubt about the deed: Clytemnestra was slain by her own son; the question to settle is, whether circumstance could justify so unnatural an act. The Furies represent the blind instinct of repulsion for the shedding of maternal blood, which no *primâ facie* argument can excuse, and which cannot be covered. Phœbus is the holy and pure power, who will not suffer moral abominations, like the unpunished insolence of the murderess Clytemnestra, to abide. Pallas stands for reason, capable of weighing motives, of disengaging a necessary act of retributive justice from brute murder. In the breasts of the human judges, these three faculties—the instinct which condemns matricide, the instinct which sanctions under any circumstance the punishment of crime, and the reason which holds the balance of impulses—are active. After much angry pleading by the advocates on both sides, the votes are taken. Half decide against Orestes; half acquit him. Pallas, by her casting vote, determines the verdict in his favour. The Eumenides, disappointed of their prey, threaten vengeance against Athens; but Pallas appeases them, and assigns them a place of honour in her city for ever.

It is clear that the three plays of this trilogy are closely bound together, and that their connection is that of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The *Agamemnon* sets forth the crime of Clytemnestra; the *Choëphoræ* exhibits the exceptional conduct of Orestes with regard to that crime; the *Eumenides* contains his exculpation. The third play offers a reconciliation of the agencies at warfare in the first and second; the curse of the house of Atreus is worked out and set at rest by the hero whose awful duty it was to revenge a father's murder on a mother. His justification lay in his submission to the divine will. Had he taken the matricidal office on himself in haste or anger, he must have added another link to the chain of crime that hitherto had bound his family through generations. What he did, however, was done with a clear conscience; and, though he suffered the maddening anguish of so terrible an act, he found rest and peace for his soul at last. Thus a new power, unrealised in the *Agamemnon* and the *Choëphoræ*, was needed for the solution presented in the *Eumenides*.

Passing from the internal structure of these dramas to their form, we may notice how Æschylus provided theatrical variety consistent with the varying subject. It was requisite that the action of the two first should take place at Mycenæ; so the scene was not altered, but the Chorus was changed, in order that the pathos of Electra's situation might be made more clear in the *Choëphoræ*. The *Eumenides* admitted not only of a new Chorus, but also of a total change of scene; it may be added that this third drama violates the unities alike of place and time.

Of the three plays of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon* is unquestionably the noblest. It is the masterpiece of Æschylus, and to one who has conquered its difficulties and imbibed its spirit it offers a spectacle of tragic grandeur not to be surpassed, hardly to be equalled, by anything which even Shakspeare produced. What some modern critics might regard as defects—

the lengthy choric passages, abstract in their thought, though splendid in their imagery—the concentration of the poet's powers on one terrific climax—for every word that Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Cassandra utter, leads up to the death-cry of the King—contribute to the excellence of a drama of this style. If we lack the variety and subtlety that charms us in a work like *Hamlet;* if, after reading the play over and over again, and testing it in many crucibles of critical analysis, we do not, as in the case of Shakspeare's tragedies, discover new and delicate beauties in the minor parts, but learn each time, and by each process, to admire the vigour of the poet's main conception, the god-like energy with which he has developed it; that may be taken as the strongest proof of its perfection as a monument of classic art.

There is, in the *Agamemnon*, an oppressive sense of multitudinous crimes, of sins gathering and swelling to produce a tempest. The air we breathe is loaded with them. No escape is possible. The marshalled thunderclouds roll ever onward, nearer and more near, and far more swiftly than the foot can flee. At last the accumulated storm bursts in the murder of Agamemnon, the majestic and unconscious victim felled like a steer at the stall; in the murder of Cassandra, who foresees her fate, and goes to meet it with the shrinking of some dumb creature, and with the helplessness of one who knows that doom may not be shunned; in the lightning flash of Clytemnestra's arrogance, who hitherto has been a glittering hypocrite, but now proclaims herself a fiend incarnate. As the Chorus cries, the rain of blood, that hitherto has fallen drop by drop, descends in torrents on the house of Atreus: but the end is not yet. The whole tragedy becomes yet more sinister when we regard it as the prelude to ensuing tragedies, as the overture to fresh symphonies and similar catastrophes. Wave after wave of passion gathers and breaks in these stupendous scenes; the ninth wave mightier than all, with a crest whereof the spray is

blood, falls foaming; over the outspread surf of gore and ruin the curtain drops, to rise upon the self-same theatre of new woes.

The imagery of the *Agamemnon* most powerfully contributes to heighten the tragic impression of the plot. At one time the ancestral Fury of the doomed house is likened to a dæmon leaping on it from above, by a metaphor which vividly suggests Blake's design of Satan pouring flame upon the dwelling of Job's sons. At another it is compared to a cormorant brooding upon its battlements; and yet again, by a stroke of irony peculiarly impressive to the Greeks, it is likened to a band of revellers. The repetition of the same class of metaphors, the frequent references to the net in which Agamemnon was to be caught, to the axe with which he and Cassandra were to be slaughtered, to the smoke and scent of blood which was to bathe the altar of the household Zeus with sacrifice unhallowed, assail the imagination with portentous monotony.

Of all the terrors in this tragedy none is so awful in itself, or so artistically heightened, as Cassandra's prophecy. Accompanying her lord and master, she has approached the palace of Mycenæ. Clytemnestra has greeted the King with a set oration, admirable for its rhetoric, covering by dark inuendoes her foul thought. Spreading upon the threshold purple raiment and mantles suited to the service of the gods—such embroidered garments, we may fancy, as Athenian ladies wrought for Pallas—she exclaims: "Descend from this thy chariot; nor set on earth, dread monarch, thy foot that trampled upon Troy." It is as though a mediæval wife should bid her lord, returning from the East, to tread on altar-cloths and sacerdotal vestments. Agamemnon shrinks from the sacrilege, but she overrules his scruples, and he complies. All this while Cassandra is seated, patient, in her car. Like a statue sculptured in monumental alabaster, with hands upon her knees, and head bowed on her breast, she waits unmoved. Then the conqueror is led in

to his doom—a doom which the Chorus, in one of their wild eddying hymns of woe, seem almost to anticipate. Still Cassandra tarries; and now Clytemnestra comes again, with taunts and dreadful irony: "Happy are you, princess though you be, to have such rich and prosperous masters; enter the palace, the sacrifice is ready at the altar, and to this, as a slave of the house, you too are bidden." But Cassandra will not move. In her soul, where, though a slave, she still retains the gift of oracular vision, she foresees her doom. She knows what the riches of the house of Atreus mean, what the prosperity of Agamemnon really is, what the sacrifice to which she too is bidden will be. Clytemnestra leaves her, half in scorn and half in anger. Then, at length, Cassandra lifts her head, and stirs herself, and groans. The first word she utters is, "Apollo! oh! Apollo!" This rouses the Chorus, and they ask: "What cry of wailing hast thou shrieked about Apollo? He is not a god to be greeted with dirges." Phœbus was, in truth, the deity of brightness and music, not of the funeral groan or death lament. Still Cassandra, with the same ill-omened utterance, reverberates the name: "Apollo! ah, Apollo! lo, a second time hast thou undone me!" To Phœbus she had promised her virginity; the promise was not kept, and he requited her with prophecy that none might heed or understand. No tragic portion is more piteous than this of her who was the clear-eyed seer of coming woes, the unwilling mouthpiece of dread oracles, doomed alike to knowledge worse than ignorance, and to the scorn that falls on idle babblers. Now, once again, descending on her with the might of prophecy, the god compels her to predict her own swift-coming fate. Little by little, at the intercession of the Chorus, Cassandra becomes more articulate. She calls the house before her "the shambles of a man, a pavement blood-bedabbled." There stands the stately palace-front; its marble steps are covered with tapestry, the statues of its protective

gods are crowned with flowers; while the lonely prophetess is shuddering at so fair a frontispiece to a tragedy within so frightful, now to be accomplished on her master and herself. Meantime the Chorus also wait, involved in their own anxiety; the mysterious anguish of the weird woman, whom they know to have the hand of God laid heavily upon her, makes them tremble. "What mean you," they exclaim, "by scenting like a dog for blood upon this royal threshold?" Cassandra only answers: "Are not these children wailing for their death enough? Is not their flesh, tasted by their father at their uncle's board, my witness?" She points to phantoms which the Chorus cannot see, the ghosts of the children of Thyestes. They reply sullenly, for they know the story of the house: "We want no soothsayers." Then Cassandra breaks forth afresh, this time vaticinating imminent calamity: "What is she plotting, what doom unbearable? and there is none to aid!" The Chorus take up their strain: "Here indeed you are a riddler; what you meant before was common talk." But Cassandra heeds them not. Her second-sight pierces the palace-walls, and she shrieks: "Mad woman, are you decking your husband for the bath? The end draws near. Hand stretches forth to hand. Is it a net of Hell? Keep the ox from the heifer! she hath caught him in her robe and slays him. I tell you he is falling, falling in the trough of death." The Chorus are puzzled by these hurried and ecstatic exclamations; but their very fear seems to keep them from the apprehension of the truth. Then Cassandra changes her tone, and bewails her own misfortunes, her coming death, and the crime of Paris which brought her to this doom, employing throughout these prophecies a lyric metre suited to their pregnant brevity. At last, when she has well-nigh worn out the patience of the Chorus, she assumes the regular iambic of common speech: "Now, then, at length shall the oracle gaze upon you free from veils like a bride. The Furies are in this house; blood-surfeited,

but not assuaged, they hold perpetual revel here. It is the crime of Atreus and of Thyestes which they hunt, and woe will fall on woe." The Chorus can only wonder that she, a foreign princess, should know the secrets of the fated race; but she tells them the story of Apollo's love, and how she deceived him, and what he wrought to punish her. Then, even as she speaks, the pang of inspiration thrills her. Perhaps the speech that follows, through its ghastly blending of visions evoked from the past with insight piercing into the immediate future, affects the imagination more intensely than any other piece of tragic declamation. Even the sleep-mutterings of Lady Macbeth, though they form a curious modern counterpart to the broken exclamations of Cassandra, are less appalling; for hers reveal a guilty conscience maddened by one crime, while Cassandra's outcry sums up the history of a whole accursed race, and expresses at the same time the agony of an innocent victim:

Woe, woe! Ah, ah! what pain!
Again the dreadful pangs oracular
Shoot through me, tempesting my soul with preludes.
See you those children seated on the house-roof?
Babes are they, like unto the shapes of dreams;
Yea, children seem they, slaughtered by their kin,
Whose hands are filled with meat of their own flesh;
Their very hearts and entrails, piteous load,
I see them bear, whereof their father tasted!
Wherefore I say, vengeance for this is plotting.
A lion, thewless, amid pillows lapped,
House-guard, alas! for my returning master—
Mine: for I needs must bear the yoke, a slave.
But he, the admiral, Ilion's overthrower,
Knows not what things the tongue of that lewd bitch
With speeches and with long-drawn fawning fairness, like
A lurking Até, by ill-luck will do.
Thus, then, she dares: she, woman, slays a man;
Yea, slays. What loathsome reptile can I name her,
Nor miss my mark?—foul amphisbæna, Scylla
That dwells in rocks, the ship-borne seaman's bane,
Raging mother of Hell, a truceless strife
Belching on friend and kindred! How she shouted
With daring swollen, as when the foemen scatter!

Now of these things I care not if I gain
No credence. What? What will be, comes; and thou
Wilt stand and pity and call me too true prophet.

No translation can do justice to the appalling fury of the original, since it is only in Greek—a language usually sedate and harmonised by sense of beauty—that such phrases as θύουσαν Ἄϊδου μητερ' have their full value. The Chorus are shaken from their incredulity, as much by the intensity of Cassandra's conviction as by the desperate calm of her last words. Is Agamemnon really to be slain? Yes, she answers, and, pray or not as you may choose, they there inside the house are slaying. Then once more the rage of divination seizes her, and the scene of her own death, like that of Agamemnon's, flames upon her soul. The second speech has more of pathos than the first, less of fury; but it is scarcely less awful:

Ah, ah! the fire! Io, how it comes upon me!
Phœbus Lycæan, ho! Ah, woe is me!
She, too, this two-foot lioness that couches
With the wolf, what time the lion is away,
Will slay me, slay me! Like a poison-brewer
She'll mix my death-wage with her broth of hell;
Yea, and she swears, sharpening the knife to slay him,
Her lord shall pay with blood for bringing me.
Why wear I, then, these gauds to laugh me down—
This rod, these necklace-wreaths oracular?
You, ere my death, at least I will destroy:—
Go; fall; away, and perish: I shall follow.
Make rich some other curse of men than me.
Lo, you! Apollo's self is stripping me
Of this prophetic raiment—he who saw me
Even in these robes jeered at mid friends by foemen,
Who scorned in chorus with one voice of vain scorn.
Yea, when I was called beggar, vagabond,
Poor, wretched, starveling, speechless, I endured:
Now he who made me prophetess, the prophet,
Himself hath brought me to these straits of death.
No altar of my fathers waits for me,
But that red block where I must reeking wallow.
Nay, but not unavenged of heaven we perish!
For yet another in our cause shall come,

Avenger, matricide, his father's champion :
Though exiled, wandering from this land a stranger,
He shall return to crown the curse of kindred :
For gods in heaven have sworn a mighty oath
That the sire's prostrate corse shall bring him home.
Why wait I, then, lamenting thus, an alien ?—
I, who beheld of old proud Ilion
Fare as she fared, and they who dwelt therein
Receive such measure from the gods of judgment,
I, too, will rise and dare, myself, to perish.
Therefore I greet these gates as gates of Hades,
Praying a full fair stroke may be my due,
That thus with blood that gently flows to waste,
Torn by no death-pangs, I these eyes may close.

The draught of prophecy is now drained to the very dregs. Nothing remains but for Cassandra to enter the palace-doors of Hades. She approaches them step by step, bewailing, after the fashion of Greek tragedy, her own woes, and those of Priam's family. Suddenly she starts. The scent of blood assails her nostrils, and, like a steer that shivers at the gory shambles, she draws back. The Chorus say, "It is only the smell of sacrifice upon the hearth." But the weird woman discovers a very different odour of coming slaughter : "To me the reek is like the breath of charnels." Still forward, though shrinking from the unseen, unavoidable doom, she must advance, invoking the avenger of herself and Agamemnon, and calling on the all-seeing sun. Her last words are uttered in the same spirit as Macbeth's soliloquy upon the point of battle ; they intensify and elevate the tragic moment by drawing the whole destiny of mortals into harmony with her own doom :

Ah, lives of men ! When prosperous, they glitter
Like a fair picture ; when misfortune comes,
A wet sponge at one blow hath blurred the painting.

Thus, at the last, tranquil and stately, she touches the door, enters, and it shuts behind her. For a while the Chorus stand alone, and sing a low, brief chant of terror. The scene is empty, and the palace-front towers up into calm light.

Then, when our nerves have been strained to the cracking-point of expectation by Cassandra's prophecy and by the silence that succeeds it, from within the house is heard the deep-chested cry of Agamemnon: "O me, I am stricken with a stroke of death!" This shriek is the most terrible incident in all tragedy, owing to its absolute and awful timeliness, its adequacy to the situation. The whole dramatic apparatus of the play has been, as it were, constructed with a view to it; yet, though we expect it, our heart stops when at last it comes. The stillness, apparently of home repose, but really of death, which broods upon the house during those last moments, while every second brings the hero nearer to his fate, has in it a concentrated awfulness that surpasses even the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*. Then comes the cry of Agamemnon, and the whole structure of terror descends upon us. It is as though an avalanche had been gathering above our heads and gradually loosening—loosening with fearfully accelerated ratio of movement as the minutes fly—until a single word will be enough to make it crumble. That word, uttered from behind the stately palace-walls, startling the guilty and oppressive silence, intimating that the workers have done working, that the victim has been taken in their toils, is nothing less than the shriek of the smitten King. It sounds once for the death-blow given: and once again it sounds, to mark a second stroke. Then shriek and silence are alike forgotten in the downfall of the mass of dread. The Chorus are torn asunder by hurried and conflicting counsels, eddying like dead leaves caught and tossed in the clutches of a tempest. Horror huddles upon horror, as the spectacle of slaughter is itself revealed—the King's corpse smoking in the silver bath, Cassandra motionless in death beside him. Above them stands Clytemnestra, shouldering her murderous axe, with open nostrils and dilated eyes, glorying in her deed, cherishing the blood-drops on her arms and dress and sprinkled bosom; while, invisible

to mortal eyes, the blood-swilled dæmon of the house sits eyeing her as its next victim. Ægisthus—craven, but spiteful—slinks forth, hyena-like, after the accomplished act, to trample on the hero and insult his grave.

Some such spectacle as this was revealed to the Athenians by the rolling back of the eccyclema at the end of the *Agamemnon*. The triumph of adulterous Clytemnestra and cowardly Ægisthus would, however, have been far from tragic in its utter moral baseness, did we not know that this drama was to be succeeded by another which should right the balance. Perhaps this is the reason why the *Oresteia* is the only extant trilogy. Its three parts are so closely interlinked that to separate them was impossible. The preservers of the *Agamemnon* were forced to preserve the *Choëphoræ;* the preservers of the *Choëphoræ* could not dispense with the *Eumenides*.

The Chorus of the *Agamemnon* demands separate criticism. The Chorus in all Greek tragedy performs, it has been often said, the part of an ideal spectator. It comments on the plot, not daring so much actively to interfere, as uttering reflections on the conduct of the *dramatis personæ*, and referring all obscure events to the arbitrament of Heaven. Thus the Chorus is a mirror of the poet's mind, an index to the moral which he inculcates, an inspired critic of each movement in the play. The choric odes, introduced at turning-points in the main action, are lyrical interbreathings that connect the past and future with the present. In the plays of Æschylus the Chorus, as I have already shown, is, moreover, personally interested in the drama. In the case of the *Agamemnon* the fortunes of the burghers of Mycenæ are engaged in the success or failure of Clytemnestra's scheme. At the same time, knowing the whole dark history of the house of Atreus, they foresee the perils which their master, as a member of that family, must run. It follows that their songs embody the moral teaching of the tragedy itself without lapsing into

mere sententiousness. Their sympathies, antipathies, and interests add a vital importance to their utterance. The burden of all these odes is that punishment for crime, however long delayed or tortuous in its operation, is inevitable. The grandeur of the whole work depends in a great measure on the force with which this idea is wrought out lyrically, sometimes by bold images, sometimes by dark inuendoes, repeated like a mystic rede, or tossed upon the eddies of a wizard chaunt. From beginning to ending these ancient men are adverse to the sons of Atreus, gloomily conscious that they cannot prosper. While recognising the justice of their cause against Paris, who had trangressed the laws of hospitable Zeus, they yet remember Agamemnon's swiftness to shed his daughter's blood, the old Erinnys which pursues the race, the wholesale slaughter of Achaian citizens before Troy's walls. These recollections inspire them with uneasiness before the Messenger appears. Their doubts are confirmed by his news that the altars of the Trojans had been dishonoured, while their mistrust of Clytemnestra adds yet a deeper hue to their alarm. Then comes the scene with Cassandra. No more doubt remains; and the only question is how to act. Even at the last moment the Chorus do not lose their faith. They defy Clytemnestra, telling her to her face that her crime must be avenged, that the curse must be worked out to the full, and that justice cannot fail to triumph. At the very end they rise to prophecy: you, yourself, unfriended in the end shall fall; the doer, when Zeus wills, shall suffer for his deed; remember, therefore, that Orestes lives.

The Choric interludes of the *Agamemnon*, though burdened with the mystery of sin and fate, and tuned to music stern and lofty, abound in strains of pathetic and of tender poetry, deep-reaching to the very fount of tears, unmatched by aught else in the Greek language. The demiurge who gave a shape to Titans and to Furies, mingled tears with the clay

of the men he wrought, and star-fire with the beauty of his women, and even for the birds of the air and the wild creatures of the woods he felt a sympathy half human, half divine. In the first Chorus, Æschylus compares the Atreidæ to eagles robbed of their young, whose cries are answered by Zeus, Phœbus, or Pan. "Hearing the shrill clamour of these airy citizens, he sendeth after-vengeance on the robbers." And, again, Artemis exacts penalty for the hare whom the eagles bore off to their nests, a prey. "So kindly disposed is the fair goddess to the tender young of fierce lions, and to the suckling brood of all beasts that range the field and forest." Thus the large philosophy of the poet includes justice for all living things, and even dumb creatures have their rights, which men may not infringe.

The depth of his human pathos no mere plummet-line of scholarship or criticism can fathom. Before the vision of Iphigeneia at the altar we must needs be silent: "Letting fall her saffron-coloured skirts to earth, she smote each slayer with a piteous arrow from her eyes, eloquent as in a picture, desiring speech, since oftentimes beside the well-spread board within her father's hall she sang, and maidenly, with chaste voice, honoured the pæan raised in happy times at festal sacrifice of her dear sire." We do not need the sententious moral of Lucretius uttered four centuries later, *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*, to point the pathos which Æschylus, with a profounder instinct, draws by one touch from the contrast between then and now. In the same strain is the description of Menelaus abandoned in his home by Helen: "She, leaving to her fellow-citizens the din of shielded hosts, and armings of the fleet with spears, bringing to Ilion destruction for a dower, went lightly through the doors, dishonourably brave; and many a sigh was uttered by the bards of the palace, while they sang —O house! O house, and rulers! O marriage-bed, and pressure on the pillows of her head who loved her lord!—He

stands by in silence, dishonoured, but without reproaches, noting with anguish of soul that she is fled. Yea, in his longing after her who is beyond the sea, a phantom will seem to rule his house. The grace of goodly statues hath grown irksome to his gaze, and in his widowhood of weary eyes all beauty fades away. But dreams that glide in sleep with sorrow, visit him, conveying a vain joy; for vain it is, when one hath seemed to see good things, and lo, escaping through his hands, the vision flies apace on wings that follow on the paths of sleep."

To read the Greek aright in this wonderful lyric, so concentrated in its imagery, and so direct in its conveyance of the very soul of passion, is no light task; but far more difficult it is to render it into another language. Yet, even thus, we feel that this poem of defrauded desire and everlasting farewell, of vain out-goings of the spirit after vanished joy, is written, not merely for Menelaus and the Greeks, but for all who stretch forth empty hands to clasp the dreams of dear ones, and then turn away, face-downward on the pillow, from the dawn, to weep or strain hot eyes that shed no tears. Touched by the same truth of feeling, which includes all human nature in its sympathy, is the lament, shortly after uttered by the Chorus, for the numberless fair men who died before Troy town. Ares, the grim gold-exchanger, who barters the bodies of men, sends home a little dust shut up within a narrow urn, and wife and father water this with tears, and cry—Behold, he perished nobly in a far land, fighting for a woman, for another's wife. And others there are who come not even thus again to their old home; but barrows on Troy plain enclose their fair young flesh, and an alien soil is their sepulchre. This picture of beautiful dead men, warriors and horsemen, in the prime of manhood, lying stark and cold, with the dishonour of the grave upon their comely hair, and with the bruises of the battle on limbs made for love, is not meant merely for Achaians, but for all—for us, perchance, whose dearest moulder on Crimean shores or

Indian plains, for whom the glorious faces shine no more; but at best some tokens, locks of hair, or books, or letters, come to stay our hunger unassuaged. How truly and how faithfully the Greek poet sang for all ages, and for all manner of men, may be seen by comparing the strophes of this Chorus with the last rhapsody but one of the chaunts outpoured in America by Walt Whitman, to commemorate the events of the great war. The pathos which unites these poets, otherwise so different in aim and sentiment, is deep as nature, real as life; but from this common root of feeling springs in the one verse a spotless lily of pure Hellenic form, in the other a mystical thick growth of fancy, where thoughts brood and nestle amid tufted branches; for the powers of classic and of modern singers upon the same substance of humanity are diverse.

The *Persæ* is certainly one of the earliest among the extant tragedies of Æschylus, since it was produced upon the stage in 473 B.C., seven years after the battle of Salamis. This drama can scarcely be called a tragedy in the common sense of the word. It is rather a tragic show, designed to grace a national festival and to preserve the memory of a great victory. That purpose it fulfilled effectively; the events it celebrates were still recent; the author of the play had fought himself at Salamis, and the whole Athenian people were glowing with the patriotic impulse that had placed them first among the States of Hellas. Æschylus was, however, too deeply conscious of the spirit of his art to let the *Persæ* sink into the rank of pageantry or triumph. The defeat of Xerxes and his host supplied him with a splendid tragic instance of pride humbled, and greatness brought to nothing, through one man's impiety and pride. The moral that the poet wished to draw is put into the mouth of Darius, whose ghost, evoked by Atossa and the Chorus, completes the tale of Persian disasters by predicting the battle of Platæa. "Swiftly are the oracles accomplished. I looked for length of days; but when a man hastes, God helps

to urge him on. It was my son's insolence, in chaining the holy Hellespont, and thinking he could stay the Bosporus, the stream divine, from flowing, which brought these woes. He thought to make a path for his army, to hold Poseidon and the powers of heaven in bondage—he a mortal, and they gods! Few of his great host shall come again to Susa. In Hellas they must pay the penalty of arrogance and godless hearts. Coming to that land, they thought it no shame to rob the statues of the gods and burn the shrines; the altars were cast down, the temples overthrown. Therefore, as they did evil, evil shall they suffer. Heaps of dead upon Platæa's plain shall tell to the third generation, by speechless signs appealing to the eyes of men, that no man mortal may dare raise his heart too high. For insolence blooms forth and bears the crop of disaster, whence one reaps a harvest of tears. Seeing which payment for these crimes, remember Hellas and Athens. Nor let a man, in scorn of his own lot, desire another's good, and spill much wealth; for Zeus, in sooth, stands high above, a grievous schoolmaster, to tame excessive lifting-up of hearts." Nowhere else, it may be said, has Æschylus thought fit so decidedly to moralise his dramatic motive, or so clearly to state in simple words his philosophy of Nemesis. The ghost of Darius, as may be conjectured from this address, does not belong to the same race as the Banquos and Hamlets of our stage. He is a political phantom, a monarch evoked from his mausoleum to give sage counsel, and well informed about the affairs of his empire.

By laying the scene of this drama at Susa, the ancient capital of the Persian kings, Æschylus was enabled to adopt a style of treatment peculiarly flattering to his Greek audience. The Persians are made to bewail their own misfortunes, to betray the rottenness of their vast empire, and to lament the wretchedness of nations subject to the caprice of irresponsible and selfish princes. Inured to slavery, they hug their chains;

and, though in rags, Xerxes is still to them a demigod. The servility of Oriental courtiers, the pomp and pride of Oriental princes, the obsequious ceremonies and the inflated flatteries of barbarians, are translated for Greek ears and eyes into gorgeous forms by the poet, whose own genius had something Asiatic in its tone and temper. Many occasions for grim irony are afforded by this mode of handling; whereof the famous speech of Atossa on the clothes of Xerxes, if that, indeed, be genuine, and the inability of the Chorus, through servile shyness, to address the ghost of Darius, furnish the most obvious examples. A finer and subtler note is struck in the dialogue between Atossa and the Chorus just before the news of the defeat at Salamis arrives. She asks where Athens may be found:

κεῖνα δ' ἐκμαθεῖν θέλω,
ὦ φίλοι, ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασὶν ἱδρῦσθαι χθονός;

This offers the poet an opportunity for putting into the mouth of the Persian coryphæus a flattering account of his own nation: No monarch have they, few are they, but all men of might, and strong enough to rout the myriad bowmen of the Persian host with spear and shield. The *naïveté* of the description—in itself highly complimentary to the Athenians—must have made it effective on the stage. We may fancy how the cheering of the men of Marathon re-echoed from the Dionysian theatre, and filled Athene's hill "song-wise" with sound, as each triumphant trochaic leapt forth from the Persian lips. At the same time the tragic irony is terrible, for the queen is on the point of hearing from the Messenger that this mere handful of spearmen crushed her son's host, countless as the stars, in one day upon sea and shore. The real point of that fierce duel of two nations, which decided the future of the human race—the contrast between barbarians and men in whom the spirit was alive, between slaves driven to the fight like sheep, and freemen acting consciously as their own

will determined, between the brute force of multitudes and the inspired courage of a few heroes—has never been expressed more radiantly than in this play. No language of criticism can do justice to the incomparable brilliancy and vigour with which the tale of Salamis is told. We must remember, in reading the speeches of the Messenger, that this is absolutely the first page of Greek history. It came before Herodotus, and the soldier-poet, who had seen what he narrated, was no less conscious than we are, after all our study, of the real issues, of the momentous interests at stake. Never elsewhere has contemporary history been written thus. In these triumphant rheseis Æschylus did not choose to maintain a bare dramatic propriety. The herald is relating disaster after disaster; yet the elation of the poet pulses through his speech, and he cannot be sad. We feel that, while he is dinning into the ears of the barbarian empress and her courtiers this panegyric of Hellenic heroism, he is really speaking to an Attic audience. The situation is, however, sufficiently sustained for theatrical purposes by the dignity wherewith Atossa meets her ruin. She shows herself a queen in spite of all, and the front she presents to "the sea of troubles" (*κακῶν πέλαγος*) breaking over the whole Asian empire, is fully adequate to the magnitude of the calamity. It is difficult to believe that the speech written for her by Æschylus, when she returns with the libations for Darius, was not intended, by its grandly decorative style, to convey the impression of calmness in the midst of sorrow. Atossa is great enough to be self-possessed, and to dwell with tender thoughtfulness upon the gifts of nature beloved by the powers of darkness. The lines are these:

βούς τ' ἀφ' ἁγνῆς λευκὸν εὔποτον γάλα,
τῆς τ' ἀνθεμουργοῦ στάγμα, παμφαὲς μέλι,
λιβάσιν ὑδρηλαῖς παρθένου πηγῆς μέτα·
ἀκήρατόν τε μητρὸς ἀγρίας ἄπο
ποτὸν παλαιᾶς ἀμπέλου γάνος τόδε·
τῆς δ' αἰὲν ἐν φύλλοισι θαλλοῖσης ἴσον

ξανθῆς ἐλαίας καρπὸς εὐώδης πάρα,
ἄνθη τε πλεκτὰ παμφόρου γαίας τέκνα.

This passage is a fair example of the "mighty line" of Æschylus, employed for purposes of pure adornment. The pomp and circumstance of tragic style, which he so well knew how to use, gave unrivalled dignity to his narration. Yet this style, even in the days of Aristophanes, had come to sound extravagant, while its occasional bombast, as in the famous periphrasis for dust,

κάσις
πηλοῦ ξύνουρος διψία κόνις,

reminds a modern reader too much of the padding of the actors' chests, the cothurnus, brazen mouthpiece, and heightened mask required by the huge size of the Athenian theatre. The phrases invented in the *Frogs* to express the peculiarities of the Æschylean exaggeration, κομποφακελορρήμονα, or ἱππολόφων λόφων κορυθαίολα νείκη, or, again,

φρίξας δ' αὐτοκόμου λοφιᾶς λασιαύχενα χαίταν
δεινὸν ἐπισκύνιον ξυνάγων βρυχώμενος ἦσεν
ῥήματα γομφοπαγῆ πινακηδὸν ἀποσπῶν
γηγενεῖ φυσήματι

very cleverly parody the effect of the more tumid passages. Yet when Æschylus chose to be simple he combined majesty with grace, strength with beauty, and speed with volume, in a style which soars higher and reaches farther than the polished perfection of Sophocles or the artistic elegance of Euripides. The descriptions of Ionia and Doria drawing Xerxes' chariot in Atossa's dream, and of the education of mankind in the *Prometheus*, belong to his more pure and chastened manner. The famous speech in which Clytemnestra tells of the leaping up of watchfire after watchfire from Troy to Mycenæ, of Ida flashing the flame to the Hermæan cliff of Lemnos, of Athos taking it up and sending it with joy across the gulf to far

Makistus, of the Messapian warders lighting their dry heath and speeding the herald-blaze in brightness like the moon to Cithæron, and thence, by peak and promontory, over fen and plain and flickering armlet of the sea, onward to Agamemnon's palace-tower—this brilliant picture, glittering with the rarest jewels of imaginative insight, can only be coupled with the Salaminian speeches of the *Persæ*. They stand in a place apart. Purity, lucidity, rapidity, energy, elevation, and fiery intensity of style are here divinely mingled. There is no language and no metre equal to the Greek and the iambic for such resonant, elastic, leaping periods as these. The firm grasp upon reality preserved by Æschylus, even in his most passionate and most imaginative moments, adds force unrivalled to these descriptive passages.

At the same time he surpassed all the poets of his nation in a certain Shakspearean concentration of phrase. The invectives uttered by Cassandra against Clytemnestra, and her broken exclamations, abound in examples of energetic, almost grotesque, imagery, not to be paralleled in Greek literature. The whole of the *Seven against Thebes*, and in particular that choric ode which describes the capture and sack of a town, might be cited with a similar intention. But perhaps the strongest instance of this more than Greek vehemence of expression is the denunciation hurled by Phœbus at the Furies in his Delphian shrine:

> Away, I bid you! Leave my palace halls:
> Quit these pure shrines oracular with speed!
> Lest haply some winged glistening serpent sent
> From the gold-twisted bow-wire bite your flesh,
> And ye, pain-stricken, vomit gory froth,
> The clotted spilth of man's blood ye have supped.
> Nay, these gates are not yours! *There* is your dwelling,
> Where heads are chopped, eyes gouged in savage justice,
> Throats cut, and bloom of boys unnameably
> Is mangled; there where nose and ears are slithered,
> With stonings, and the piteous smothered moan

Of slaves impaled. Hence! Hear ye not whereby,
Loving like ghouls these banquets, ye're become
To gods abominable? Lo, your shape
Bewrays your spirit. Blood-swilled lions' dens
Are fit for you to live in, not the seat
Of sooth oracular, which you pollute.
Go, heifers grazing without herdsmen, go!
To herd like yours no face of god is kindly.

Another Shakspearean quality in the Æschylean use of language and of imagery might be illustrated from his metaphors. He calls the ocean a forest—*πόντιον ἄλσος* or *ἁλίξυστον ἄλσος*—as though he would remind us of the great sea-beasts that roam like wolves or lions down beneath the waves. The vultures are *ὀξύστομοι Ζηνὸς ἀκραγεῖς κύνες*. The eagle is *Διὸς πτηνὸς κύων δαφοινός*. The Furies of Clytemnestra are *μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες*. The Argives who poured forth from the Wooden Horse to plunder Troy are called *Ἀργεῖον δάκος, ἵππου νεοσσός, ἀσπιδηφόρος λεώς*. The flame of the thunderbolt becomes *πυρὸς ἀμφήκης βόστρυχος*. The beacon-flame on Ægiplanctus is a huge beard, *φλογὸς μέγαν πώγωνα*. In all these metaphors we trace an imaginative energy which the Greek poets usually sought to curb. When we speak of the mighty line of Æschylus, we naturally remember verses like these:

ἀλλ' οὐ καρανιστῆρες ὀφθαλμωρύχοι,

and,

φαιοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι
πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν,

which carry with them a massive weight not only of sound and words, but also of meaning and of imagery. No wonder that Aristophanes jestingly compared the gravity of the style of Æschylus with that of Euripides in balances. A single phrase of the former's causes a score of the latter's to kick the beam; and as the sonorous nouns, flanked by their polysyllabic epithets, advance, the earth is seen to shake as though battalions were hurrying to the charge, and squadrons of cavalry

with thundering horses' hoofs and waving plumes were prancing on the plain.

The difficulty of Æschylus, when it is not due, as in the *Suppliants* and in the choric odes of the *Agamemnon*, to a ruined text, may be ascribed to the rapidity of his transition from one thought to another, to the piling up of images and metaphors, and to the remote and mystic nature of the ideas he is seeking for the first time to express in language. Where even simple prose could scarcely convey his meaning, he presents a cloud of highly poetic figures to our mind. This kind of difficulty, however, like that which the student has to meet in Pindar, is straightforward. You know when you are at fault, and why, and how alone you can arrive at a solution of the problem. The difficulty of Sophocles is more insidious. It is possible to think you understand him, when you really do not; to feel his drift, and yet to find it hard to construe his language. In this case the difficulty arises from the poet's desire to convey his meaning in a subtle, many-sided, pregnant, and yet smooth style. The more you think over it, the more you get from it. Euripides belonged to an age of facile speech, fixed phraseology, and critical analysis: it therefore follows that he presents fewer obvious difficulties to the reader; and this, perhaps, was one reason for his popularity among the early scholars of the modern age. At any rate, he does not share with Æschylus the difficulty that arose when a poet of intense feeling and sublime imagination strove to grapple with deep and intricate thoughts before language had become a scientific instrument.

In conclusion I would once again return to that doctrine of παθήματα μαθήματα, connected with a definite conception of the divine government, and based upon a well-considered theory of human responsibility, which may be traced throughout the plays of Æschylus. To this morality his drama owes its unity and vigour, inasmuch as all the plots constructed by

the poet both presuppose and illustrate it. The conviction that what a man sows he will reap, and that the world is not ruled by blind chance, is, in one sense or another, the most solid ethical acquisition of humanity. Amid so much else that seems to shift in morals and in religion, it affords firm ground for action. This vital moral faith the Greeks held as securely, at least, as we do; and the theology with which their highest teachers—men like Æschylus, Pindar, Plato—sought to connect it, tended to weaken its effect far less than any other systems of divinity have done. We are too apt to forget this, while we fix our attention upon the unrivalled beauty of Greek art. In reality there are few nations whose fine literature combines so much æsthetic splendour with direct, sound, moral doctrine; and this, not because the poets strove to preach, but because their minds were healthily imbued with human wisdom. Except in the works of Milton, we English, for example, can show no poetical exposition of a moral theory at all equal to that of Æschylus. But while Milton sets forth his doctrine as a portion of divine revelation, and vitiates it with the dross of dogmatism, Æschylus shows the law implicit in the history of men and heroes: it is inferred by him intuitively from the facts of spiritual life, as apprehended by the consciousness of the Greeks in their best age.

CHAPTER VII.

SOPHOCLES.

The Personal Beauty of Sophocles—His Life—Stories about Him.—Athens in the Age of Pericles.—Antique Criticism on his Style—Its perfect Harmony.—Aristotle's Respect for Sophocles.—Character in Greek Tragedy.—Sophocles and Æschylus.—The Religious Feeling of Sophocles.—His Ethics.—Exquisite Proportion observed in his Treatment of the *Dramatis Personæ*.—Power of using Motives.—The *Philoctetes*.—Comparison of the *Choëphoræ* and the *Electra*.—Climax of the *Œdipus Coloneüs*.—How Sophocles led onward to Euripides.—The *Trachiniæ*.—Goethe's Remarks on the *Antigone*.—The Tale of Thebes.—*Œdipus Tyrannus*, *Œdipus Coloneüs*, and *Antigone* do not make up a Trilogy.—Story of Laius.—The Philosophy of Fate contained in it.—The Oracle.—Analysis of *Œdipus Tyrannus*.—Masterly Treatment of the Character of Œdipus.—Change of Situation in the *Coloneüs*—Emergence of Antigone into Prominence.—Analysis of the *Antigone*.—The Character of Antigone.—Its Beauty.—Contrast afforded by Ismene and by Creon.—Fault in the Climax of the *Antigone*.—The Final Solution of the Laian Curse.—Antigone is not subject to Nemesis.

SOPHOCLES, the son of Sophilus, was born at Colonus, a village about one mile to the north-west of Athens, in the year 495 B.C. This date makes him thirty years younger than Æschylus, and fifteen older than Euripides. His father was a man of substance, capable of giving the best education, intellectual and physical, to his son; and the education in vogue at Athens when Sophocles was a boy was that which Aristophanes praised so glowingly in the speeches of the Dikaios Logos. Therefore, in the case of this most perfect poet, the best conditions of training (τροφή) were added to the advantages

of nature (φύσις), and these two essential elements of a noble manhood, upon which the theorists of Greece loved to speculate, were realised by him conjointly in felicitous completeness. Early in life Sophocles showed that nature had endowed him with personal qualities peculiarly capable of conferring lustre on a Greek artist of the highest type. He was exceedingly beautiful and well-formed, and so accomplished in music and gymnastics that he gained public prizes in both these branches of a Greek boy's education. His physical grace and skill in dancing caused him to be chosen, in his sixteenth year, to lead the choir in celebration of the victory of Salamis. According to Athenian custom, he appeared on this occasion naked, crowned, and holding in his hand a lyre :—

> εἴθε λύρα καλὴ γενοίμην ἐλεφαντίνη,
> καί με καλοὶ παῖδες φέροιεν Διονύσιον ἐς χορόν.*

These facts are not unimportant, for no Greek poet was more thoroughly, consistently, and practically εὐφυής, according to the comprehensive meaning of that term, which denotes physical, as well as moral and intellectual, distinction. The art of Sophocles is distinguished above all things by its faultless symmetry, its grace and rhythm, and harmonious equipoise of strength and beauty. In his own person the poet realised the ideal combination of varied excellences which his tragedies exhibit. The artist and the man were one in Sophocles. In his healthful youth and sober manhood, no less than in his serene poetry, he exhibited the pure and tempered virtues of εὐφυία. We cannot but think of him as specially created to represent Greek art in its most refined and exquisitely balanced perfection. It is impossible to imagine a more plastic nature, a genius more adapted to its special function, more fittingly provided with all things needful to its full develop-

* "Fain would I be a fair lyre of ivory, and fair boys carrying me to Dionysus' choir."

ment, born at a happier moment in the history of the world, and more nobly endowed with physical qualities suited to its intellectual capacity.

In 468 B.C. Sophocles first appeared as a tragic poet in contest with Æschylus. The advent of the consummate artist was both auspicious and dramatic. His fame, as a gloriously endowed youth, had been spread far and wide. The supremacy of his mighty predecessor remained as yet unchallenged. Therefore the day on which they met in rivalry was a great national occasion. Party feeling ran so high that Apsephion, the Archon Eponymus, who had to name the judges, chose no meaner umpires than the general Cimon and his colleagues, just returned from Scyros, bringing with them the bones of the Attic hero, Theseus. Their dignity and their recent absence from the city were supposed to render them fair critics in a matter of such moment. Cimon awarded the victory to Sophocles. It is greatly to be regretted that we have lost the tragedies which were exhibited on this occasion; we do not know, indeed, with any certainty, their titles. As Welcker has remarked, the judges were called to decide, not so much between two poets as between two styles of tragedy; and if Plutarch's assertion, that Æschylus retired to Sicily in consequence of the verdict given against him, be well founded, we may also believe that two rival policies in the city were opposed, two types of national character in collision. Æschylus belonged to the old order. Sophocles was essentially a man of the new age, of the age of Pericles, and Pheidias, and Thucydides. The incomparable intellectual qualities of the Athenians of that brief blossom-time have so far dazzled modern critics that we have come to identify their spirit with the spirit itself of the Greek race. Undoubtedly the glories of Hellas, her special *geist* in art, and thought, and statecraft, attained at that moment to maturity through the felicitous combination of external circumstances, and through the prodigious mental

greatness of the men who made Athens so splendid and so powerful. Yet we must not forget that Themistocles preceded Pericles, while Cleon followed after; that Herodotus came before Thucydides, and that Aristotle, at a later date, philosophised on history; that Æschylus and Euripides have each a shrine in the same temple with Sophocles. And all these men, whose names are notes of differences deep and wide, were Greeks, almost contemporaneous. The latter and the earlier groups in this triple series are, perhaps, even more illustrative of Greece at large; while the Periclean trio represent Athenian society in a special and narrow sense at its most luminous and brilliant, most isolated and artificial, most self-centred and consummate point of *αὐταρχεία*, or internal adequacy. Sophocles was the poet of this transient phase of Attic culture, unexampled in the history of the world for its clear and flawless character, its purity of intellectual type, its absolute clairvoyance, and its plenitude of powers matured, but unimpaired, by use.

From the date 468 to the year of his death, at the age of ninety, Sophocles composed one hundred and thirteen plays. In twenty contests he gained the first prize; he never fell below the second place. After Æschylus he only met one formidable rival, Euripides. What we know about his life is closely connected with the history of his works. In 440 B.C., after the production of the *Antigone*, he was chosen, on account of his political wisdom, as one of the generals associated with Pericles in the expedition to Samos. But Sophocles was not, like Æschylus, a soldier; nor was he in any sense a man of action. The stories told about his military service turn wholly upon his genial temperament, serene spirits, unaffected modesty, and pleasure-loving personality. So great, however, was the esteem in which his character for wisdom and moderation was held by his fellow-citizens that they elected him in 413 B.C. one of the ten commissioners of Public Safety, or *πρόβουλοι*,

after the failure of the Syracusan expedition. In this capacity he gave his assent to the formation of the governing council of the Four Hundred two years later, thus voting away the constitutional liberties of Athens. It is recorded that he said this measure was not a good one, but the best under bad circumstances. It should, however, be said that doubt has been thrown over this part of the poet's career; it is not certain that the Sophocles in question was in truth the author of *Antigone.*

One of the best-authenticated and best-known episodes in the life of Sophocles is connected with the *Œdipus Coloneüs.* As an old man, he had to meet a lawsuit brought against him by his legitimate son Iophon, who accused him of wishing to alienate his property to the child of his natural son Ariston. This boy, called Sophocles, was the darling of his later years. The poet was arraigned before a jury of his tribe, and the plea set up by Iophon consisted of an accusation of senile incapacity. The poet, preserving his habitual calmness, recited the famous chorus which contains the praises of Colonus. Whereupon the judges rose and conducted him with honour to his house, refusing for a moment to consider so frivolous and unwarranted a charge.

Personally Sophocles was renowned for his geniality and equability of temper; εὔκολος μὲν ἐνθάδ' εὔκολος δ' ἐκεῖ is the terse and emphatic description of his character by Aristophanes. That he was not averse to pleasures of the sense, is proved by evidence as good as that on which such biographical details of the ancients generally rest. To slur these stories over because they offend modern notions of propriety is feeble, though, of course, it is always open to the critic to call in question the authorities; and in this particular instance the witnesses are far from clear. The point, however, to be remembered is that, supposing them true to fact, Sophocles would himself have smiled at such unphilosophical

partisanship as seeks to overthrow them in the interest of his reputation. That a poet, distinguished for his physical beauty, should refrain from sensual enjoyments in the flower of his age, is not a Greek, but a Christian notion. Such abstinence would have indicated in Sophocles mere want of inclination. The words of Pindar are here much to the purpose—

*χρῆν μὲν κατὰ καιρὸν ἐρώτων δρέπεσθαι, θυμέ, σὺν ἁλικίᾳ.**

All turned upon the *κατὰ καιρόν*, and no one had surely a better sense of the *καιρός*, the proper time and season for all things, than Sophocles. He showed his moderation—which quality, not total abstinence, was virtue in such matters for the Greeks—by knowing how to use his passions, and when to refrain from their indulgence. The whole matter is summed up in this passage from the *Republic* of Plato: "How well I remember the aged poet Sophocles, when, in answer to the question, 'How does love suit with age, Sophocles—are you still the man you were?' 'Peace,' he replied; 'most gladly have I escaped from that, and I feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master.'"

A more serious defect in the character of Sophocles is implied in the hint given by Aristophanes, that he was too fond of money. The same charge was brought against many Greek poets. We may account for it by remembering that the increased splendour of Athenian life, and the luxuriously refined tastes of the tragedian, must have tempted him to do what the Greeks very much disliked—make profit by the offspring of his brain. To modern notions nothing can sound stranger than the invectives of the philosophers against sophists who sold their wisdom; it can only be paralleled by their deeply rooted misconceptions about interest on capital, which even Aristotle

* "Soul of mine, in due season it is meet to gather love, when life is young."

regarded as unnatural and criminal. That Sophocles was in any deeper sense avaricious or miserly we cannot believe: it would contradict the whole tenor of the tales about his geniality and kindness.

Unlike Æschylus and Euripides, Sophocles never quitted Athens, except on military service. He lived and wrote there through his long career of laborious devotion to the highest art. We have, therefore, every right, on this count also, to accept his tragedies as the purest mirror of the Athenian mind at its most brilliant period. Athens, in the age of Pericles, was adequate to the social and intellectual requirements of her greatest sons; and a poet whose earliest memories were connected with Salamis may well have felt that even the hardships of the Peloponnesian War were easier to bear within the sacred walls of the city than exile under the most favourable conditions. No other centre of so much social and political activity existed. Athens was the Paris of Greece, and Sophocles and Socrates were the Parisians of Athens. At the same time the stirring events of his own lifetime do not appear to have disturbed the tranquillity of Sophocles. True to his destiny, he remained an artist; and to this immersion in his special work he owed the happiness which Phrynichus recorded in these famous lines:—

μάκαρ Σοφοκλεής ὃς πολὺν χρόνον βιοὺς
ἀπέθανεν εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ καὶ δεξιός·
πολλὰς ποιήσας καὶ καλὰς τραγωδίας
καλῶς ἐτελεύτησ' οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακόν.

Thrice happy Sophocles! in good old age,
Blessed as a man, and as a craftsman blessed,
He died: his many tragedies were fair,
And fair his end, nor knew he any sorrow.

The change effected by Sophocles in tragedy tended to mature the drama as a work of pure art, and to free it further from the Dionysiac traditions. He broke up the Trilogy into

separate plays, exhibiting three tragedies and a satyric drama, like Æschylus before him, but undoing the link by which they were connected, so that he was able to make each an independent poem. He added a third actor, and enlarged the number of the Chorus, while he limited its function as a motive force in the drama. These innovations had the effect of reducing the scale upon which Æschylus had planned his tragedies, and afforded opportunities for the elaboration of detail. It was more easy for Sophocles than it had been for Æschylus to exhibit play of character through the interaction of the *dramatis personæ*. Tragedy left the remote and mystic sphere of Æschylean theosophy, and confined herself to purely human arguments. Attention was concentrated on the dialogue, in which the passions of men in action were displayed. The dithyrambic element was lost; the choric odes providing a relief from violent excitement, instead of embodying the very soul and spirit of the poet's teaching. While limiting the activity of the Chorus, Sophocles did not, like Euripides, proceed to disconnect it from the tragic interest, or pay less attention than his predecessors to its songs. On the contrary, his choric interludes are models of perfection in this style of lyric poetry, while their subject-matter is invariably connected with the chief concerns and moral lessons of the drama.

The extant plays of Sophocles are all later than the year 440 B.C. They may safely be said to belong to the period of his finished style; or, in the language of art criticism, to his third manner. What this means will appear from a valuable passage in Plutarch: "Sophocles used to say that, when he had put aside the tragic pomp of Æschylus, and then the harsh and artificial manner of his own elaborate style, he arrived in the third place at a form of speech which is best suited to portray the characters of men, and is the most excellent." Thus it would appear that Sophocles had begun his career as a dramatist by the study of the language of Æschylus; finding

that too turgid and emphatic, he had fallen into affectation and refinement, and finally had struck the just medium between the rugged majesty of his master and the mannered elegance which was in vogue among the sophists. The result was that peculiar mixture of grace, dignity, and natural eloquence which scholars know as Sophoclean. It is interesting to notice that the first among the extant tragedies of Sophocles, the *Antigone*, is more remarkable for studied phrase and verbal subleties than his later plays. The *Œdipus Coloneüs*, which is the last of the whole series, exhibits the style of the poet in its perfect purity and freedom. A curious critical passage in Plutarch seems to indicate that the ancients themselves observed the occasional euphuism of the Sophoclean style as a blemish. It runs thus: μέμψαιτο δ' ἄν τις Αἰσχιλόχου μὲν τὴν ὑπόθεσιν. . . . Εὐριπίδου δὲ τὴν λαλιάν, Σοφοκλέους δὲ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν.* "One might censure the garrulity of Euripides and the inequality of Sophocles." I am not, however, certain whether this or "linguistic irregularity" is the right meaning of the word ἀνωμαλία. Another censure, passed by Longinus upon Sophocles, points out a defect which is the very last to be observed in any of the extant tragedies:—"Pindar and Sophocles at one time burn everything before them in their fiery flight, but often strangely lack the flame of inspiration, and fall most grievously to earth." † Then he adds: "Certainly no wise critic would value all the plays of Ion put together at the same rate as the single tragedy of *Œdipus*." The importance of these critiques is to prove that the ancients regarded Sophocles as an unequal, and in some respects a censurable poet, whence we may infer that only masterpieces belonging to his later style have been preserved to us, since nothing, to a modern student, is more obvious than the uniform sustained perfection of our seven inestimably precious tragedies. A certain tameness in the

* *De Aud. Poet.* p. 16 C. † *De Subl.* xxxiii. 5.

Trachiniæ, and a relaxation of dramatic interest in the last act of the *Ajax*, are all the faults it is possible to find with Sophocles.

What Sophocles is reported to have said about his style will apply to his whole art. The great achievement of Sophocles was to introduce regularity of proportion, moderation of tone, and proper balance into tragedy. The Greek phrases συμμετρία, σωφροσύνη, μετρίοτης—proportion of parts, self-restraint, and moderation—sum up the qualities of his drama when compared with that of Æschylus. Æschylus rough-hewed like a Cyclops, but he could not at the same time finish like Praxiteles. What the truth of this saying is, I have already tried to show.* Sophocles attempted neither Cyclopean nor Praxitelean work. He attained to the perfection of Pheidias. Thus we miss in his tragedies the colossal scale and terrible effects of Æschylean art. His plays are not so striking at first sight, because it was his aim to put all the parts of his composition in their proper places, and to produce a harmony which should not agitate or startle, but which upon due meditation should be found complete. The σωφροσύνη, or moderation, exhibited in all his work, implies by its very nature the sacrifice of something — the sacrifice of passion and impetuosity to higher laws of equability and temper. So perfect is the beauty of Sophocles, that, as in the case of Raphael or Mozart, it seems to conceal the strength and fire which animate his art.

Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, observes that "Poetry is the proper affair of either enthusiastic or artistic natures," εὐφυοῦς ἢ μανικοῦ. Now Æschylus exactly answers to the notion of the μανικός, while Sophocles corresponds to that of the εὐφυής. To this distinction between the two types of genius we may refer the partiality of Aristotle for the younger dramatist. The work of the artistic poet is more instructive, and offers more matter for profitable analysis, for precept and example, than that of the divinely inspired enthusiast. Where creative intelligence has been used

* See above, p. 158.

consciously and effectively to a certain end, critical intelligence can follow. It is clear that in the *Poetics*, which we may regard as a practical text-book for students, the philosopher is using the tragedy of Sophocles, and in particular the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, as the standard of perfection. Whatever he has to say about the handling of character, the treatment of the fable, the ethics of the drama, the catastrophes and recognitions (περιπέτειαι and ἀναγνωρίσεις), that absorbed so large a part of his dramatic analysis, he points by references to *Œdipus*. In Sophocles Aristotle found the μεσότης, or intermediate quality, between two extremes, which, in æsthetics as in morals, seemed to his Greek mind most excellent. Consequently he notes all deflections from the Sophoclean norm as faulty; and since in his day Euripides led the taste of the Athenians, he frequently shows how tragic art had suffered by a deviation from the principles Sophocles illustrated. The chief point on which he insists is the morality of the drama. "The tragedies of the younger poets for the most part are unethical." With his use of the word ἦθος, we must be careful not to confound the modern notion of morality: ἦθος means, indeed, with Aristotle as with us, the determination of the character to goodness or badness; but it also includes considerations of what is appropriate to sex and quality and circumstance in the persons of a work of fiction. The best modern equivalent for ἦθος, therefore, is character. Since tragedy is an imitation of men acting according to their character, ἦθος, in this wide sense, is the whole stuff of the dramatist, and a proper command of ἦθος implies real knowledge of mankind. Therefore, when Aristotle accuses the tragedies of Euripides and his school of being "unethical," he does not merely mean that they were prejudicial to good manners, but also that they were false to human nature, unscientific, and therefore inartistic; exceptional or morbid, wavering in their conception and unequal in their execution.

The truly great poet, Sophocles, shows his artistic tact and taste by only selecting such characters as are suitable to tragedy. He depicts men, but men of heroic mould, men as they ought to be.* When Sophocles said that he portrayed men as tragedy required them to be, whereas Euripides drew them just as they are, he indicated the real solution of the tragic problem.† The point here raised by Aristotle has an intimate connection with its whole theory of tragedy. Tragic poetry must purify the passions of fear and pity; in other words, it must teach men not to fear when fear is vile, or to pity where pity would be thrown away. By exhibiting a spectacle that may excite the fear of really dreadful calamity, and compassion for truly terrible misfortune, tragedy exalts the soul above the ordinary miseries of life, and nerves it to face the darker evils to which humanity in its blindness, sin, and self-pride is exposed. Now this lesson cannot be taught by drawing men as they exist around us. That method drags the mind back to the trivialities of every day.

What Aristotle says about the ἤθη of tragedy may be applied to point the differences between Sophocles and Æschylus. He has not himself drawn the comparison; but it is clear that, as Euripides deflects on the one hand from the purely ethical standard, so also does Æschylus upon the other. Æschylus keeps us in the high and mystic region of religious fatalism. Sophocles transports us into the more human region of morality. His problem is to exhibit the complexities of life—"whatsoever has passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man's thoughts from within"—and to set forth men of noble mental stature acting in subjection to

* Notice the phrases βελτιόνες in *Poet.*, Cap. ii., as compared with καθ' ἡμᾶς, and again ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες, καλλίους γράφουσιν in Cap. xv., together with the whole analogy of painting in both of these places.

† Cap. xxvi.

the laws appointed for the order of the world. His men and women are like ourselves, only larger and better in so far as they are simpler and more beautiful. Like the characters of Æschylus, they suffer for their sins; but we feel that the justice that condemns them is less mystic in its operation, more capable of philosophical analysis and scientific demonstration.

It must not be, therefore, thought that Sophocles is less religious than Æschylus. On the contrary, he shows how the will and passion of men are inevitably and invariably related to divine justice. Human affairs can only be understood by reference to the deity; for the decrees of Zeus, or of that power which is above Zeus, and which he also obeys, give their moral complexion to the motives and the acts of men. Yet, while Æschylus brings his theosophy in detail prominently forward, Sophocles prefers to maintain a sense of the divine background. He spiritualises religion, while he makes it more indefinite. By the same process it is rendered more impregnable within its stronghold of the human heart and reason, less exposed to the attacks of logic or the changes of opinion. The key note to his tragic morality is found in these two passages: *—

"Oh! that my lot may lead me in the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyreah had their birth, of which heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old."

The second is like unto the first in spirit:—

"It was no Zeus who thus commanded me,
Nor Justice, dread mate of the nether powers,—
For they, too, gave these rules to govern men.
Nor did I fondly deem thy proclamations
Were so infallible that any mortal
Might overleap the sure unwritten laws

* *Œd. Tyr.* 863; *Ant.* 450. The first translation is borrowed from Mr. M. Arnold.

Of gods. These neither now nor yesterday,
Nay, but from everlasting without end,
Live on, and no man knows when they were issued."

The religious instinct in Sophocles has made a long step toward independence since the days of Æschylus. No more upon Olympus or at Delphi alone will the Greek poet worship. He has learned that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The voice that speaks within him is the deity he recognises. At the same time the Chorus of the *Œdipus*, part of which has just been quoted, and that of the *Antigone*, which bewails the old doom of the house of Labdacus, might, but for their greater calmness, have been written by Æschylus. The moral doctrine of Greek tragedy has not been changed, but humanised. We have got rid in a great measure of ancient dæmons, and brass-footed Furies, and the greed of earth for blood in recompense for blood. We have passed, as it were, from the shadow cast by the sun, into the sunlight itself. And, in consequence of this transfiguration, the morality of Sophocles is imperishable. "Not of to-day nor of yesterday, but fixed from everlasting," are his laws. We may all learn of him now, as when Antigone first stood before the throne of Creon on the Attic stage. The deep insight into human life, that most precious gift of the Greek genius, which produced their greatest contributions to the education of the world, is in Sophocles obscured no longer by mystical mythology and local superstition. His wisdom is the common heritage of human nature.

The moral judgments of Æschylus were severe. Those of Sophocles, implicit in his tragic situations rather than expressed, are not less firm; but he seems to feel a more tender pity for humanity in its weakness and its blindness. The philosophy of life, profoundly sad upon the one side, but cheerful on the other, which draws lessons of sobriety and tempered joy from the consideration of human impotence and ignorance, is truly

Greek. We find it nowhere more strongly set forth than by Sophocles and Aristophanes—by the comic poet in the Parabasis of the *Birds*, and in the songs of the Mystæ in the *Frogs*, by the tragic poet in his choruses, and also in what is called his irony.

All that has been said about the art of Sophocles up to this point has tended to establish one position. His innate and unerring tact, his sense of harmony and measure, produced at Athens a new style of drama, distinguished for finish of language, for careful elaboration of motives, for sharp and delicate character-drawing, and for balance of parts. If we do not find in Sophocles anything to match the passion of Cassandra, the cry of Agamemnon, or the opening of the *Eumenides*, there is yet in his plays a combination of quite sufficient boldness and inventiveness with more exquisite workmanship than Æschylus could give. The breadth of the whole is not lost through the minuteness of the details. Unlike Æschylus, Sophocles opens very quietly, with conversations, for the most part, which reveal the characters of the chief persons or explain the situation. The passion grows with the development of the plot, and it is only when the play is finished that justice can be done to any separate part. Each of the seven tragedies presents one person, who dominates the drama, and in whom its interest is principally concentrated. Œdipus in his two plays, Antigone in hers, Philoctetes in his, Deianeira in the *Trachiniæ*, Electra in her play, and Ajax in his, stand forth in powerful and prominent relief. Then come figures on the second plane, no less accurately conceived and conscientiously delineated, but used with a view to supporting the chief personages, and educing their decisive action.* A *rôle* of this kind is given to Orestes in the *Electra*, to Neoptolemus in the *Philoctetes*, to Teucer in the *Ajax*, to Creon in the *Antigone*, to

* See what Goethe says about the importance of Creon and Ismene in the *Antigone* (Eckermann, vol. i.).

Teiresias in the *Œdipus*. Clytemnestra and Tecmessa, Odysseus and Theseus, play similar parts. Again, there is a third plane for characters still more subordinate, but no less artistically important, such as Jocasta, Ismene, Chrysothemis, Ægisthus, Hyllus. Then follow the numerous accessory persons—*instrumenta dramatis*—the guardian of the corpse of Polyneices, the shepherd of Laius, the tutor of Orestes, messengers and servants, all of whom receive their special physiognomy from the great master. In this way Sophocles made true æsthetic use of the three agonistæ. The principle on which these parts were distributed in his tragedies will be found to have deep and subtle analogies with the laws of bas-relief in sculpture. Poetry, however, being a far more independent art than sculpture, may employ a greater multiplicity of parts, and produce a far more complex effect than can be realised in bas-relief.

The *Philoctetes* might be selected as an example of the power in handling motives possessed by Sophocles. The amount of interest he has concentrated by a careful manipulation of one point—the contest for the bow of Herakles—upon so slight and stationary a plot, is truly wonderful. Not less admirable is the contrast between the youthful generosity of Neoptolemus and the worldly wisdom of Odysseus—the young man pliant at first to the crafty persuasions of the elder, but restored to his sense of honour by the compassion which Philoctetes stirs, and by the trust he places in him. Nothing more beautiful can be conceived than this moral revolution in the character of Neoptolemus. It suited the fine taste and exquisite skill of Sophocles not only to exhibit changes in circumstance and character, but also to compel a change of sympathy and of opinion in his audience. Thus, in the *Ajax*, he contrives to reverse the whole situation, by showing in the end Ajax sublime and Odysseus generous, though at first the one seemed sunk below humanity, and the other hateful in his

vulgar scorn of a fallen rival. The art which works out psychological problems of the subtle kind, and which invests a plot like that of the *Philoctetes* with intense interest, is very far removed from the method of Æschylus. The difference between the two styles may, however, be appreciated best by a comparison of the *Electra* with the *Choëphoræ*. In these two tragedies very nearly the same motives are employed; but what was simple and straightforward in Æschylus, becomes complex and involved in Sophocles. Instead of Orestes telling the tale of his own death, we have the narrative of his tutor, confirmed and ratified by himself in person. Instead of Electra at once recognising her brother, she is brought at first to the verge of despair by hearing of his death. Then Chrysothemis informs her of the lock of hair. This, however, cannot reassure Electra in the face of the tutor's message. So the situation is admirably protracted. Æschylus misses all that is gained for the development of character by the resolve of Electra, stung to desperation by her brother's death, to murder Ægisthus, and by the contrast between her single-hearted daring and the feebler acquiescent temper of Chrysothemis. Also the peripeteia whereby Electra is made to bewail the urn of Orestes, and then to discover him alive before her, is a stroke of supreme art which was missed in the *Choëphoræ*. The pathos of the situation is almost too heartrending; at one moment its intensity verges upon discord; but the resolution of the discord comes in that long cadence of triumphant harmony when the anagnorisis at length arrives. Nor is the ingenuity of Sophocles, in continuing and sustaining the interest of this one set of motives, yet exhausted. While the brother and sister are rejoicing together, the action waits, and every moment becomes more critical, until at last the tutor reappears and warns them of their perilous imprudence. To take another point: the dream of Clytemnestra is more mysterious and doubtful in the *Electra* than in the *Choëphoræ*; while her appearance on the

stage at the beginning of the play, her arguments with Electra, her guarded prayers to Phœbus, and her reception of the tutor's message, enable Sophocles fully to develop his conception of her character. On the other hand, Sophocles has sacrificed the most brilliant features of the *Choëphoræ*—the dreadful scene of Clytemnestra's death, than which there is nothing more passionately piteous and spirit-quelling in all tragedy, and the descent of his mother's furies on the murderer. It was the object of Sophocles not so much to dwell upon the action of Orestes, as to exhibit the character of Electra; therefore, at the supreme moment, when the cry of the queen is heard within the palace, he shows his heroine tremendous in her righteous hatred and implacable desire for vengeance. Such complete and exhaustive elaboration of motives, characters, and situations, as forms the chief artistic merit of the *Electra*, would, perhaps, have been out of place in the *Choëphoræ*, which was only the second play in a trilogy, and had therefore to be simple and stationary, according to the principles of Æschylean art. The character of Clytemnestra, for example, needed no development, seeing that she had taken the first part in the *Agamemnon*. Again, it was necessary for Æschylus to insist upon the action of Orestes more than Sophocles was forced to do, in order that the climax of the *Choëphoræ* might produce the subject of the *Eumenides*. In comparing Sophocles with his predecessor, we must never forget that we are comparing single plays with trilogies. This does not, however, make the Sophoclean mastery of motives and of plots the less admirable; it only fixes our attention on the real nature of the innovations adopted by the younger dramatist.

Another instance of the art wherewith Sophocles prepared a tragic situation, and graduated all the motives which should conduct the action to a final point, may be selected from the *Œdipus Coloneüs*. It was necessary to describe the death of Œdipus, since the fable selected for treatment precluded

anything approaching to a presentation on the stage of this supreme event. Œdipus is bound to die alone mysteriously, delivering his secret first in solitude to Theseus. A Messenger's speech was therefore imperatively demanded, and to render that the climax of the drama taxed all the resources of the poet. First comes thunder, the acknowledged signal of the end. Then the speech of Œdipus, who says that now, though blind, he will direct his steps unhelped. Theseus is to follow and to learn. Œdipus rises from his seat; his daughters and the king attend him. They quit the stage, and the Chorus is left alone to sing. Then comes the Messenger, and gives the sublime narration of his disappearance. We hear the voice that called—

> ὦ οὗτος οὗτος Οἰδίπους τί μέλλομεν
> χωρεῖν; πάλαι δὴ τἀπὸ σοῦ βραδύνεται.

We see the old man descending the mysterious stairs, Antigone and Ismene grouped above, and last, the kneeling king, who shrouds his eyes before a sight intolerable. All this, as in a picture, passes before our imagination. To convey the desired effect otherwise than by a narrative would have been impossible, and the narrative, owing to the expectation previously raised, is adequate.

To compare Sophocles with Euripides, after having said so much about the points of contrast between him and Æschylus, and to determine how much he may have owed in his later plays to the influence of the younger poet, would be an interesting exercise of criticism. That, however, belongs rather to an essay dealing directly with the third Greek dramatist in detail. It is sufficient here to notice a few points in which Sophocles seems to have prepared the way for Euripides. In the first place he developed the part of the Messenger, and made far more of picturesque description than Æschylus had done. Then, again, his openings suggested the device of the prologue by their abandonment of the eminently scenic effects with which

Æschylus preferred to introduce a drama. The separation of the Chorus from the action was another point in which Sophocles led onward to Euripides. So also was the device of the *deus ex machinâ* in the *Philoctetes*, unless, indeed, we are to regard this as an invention adopted from Euripides.* Nor, in this connection, is it insignificant that Aristotle credits Sophocles with the invention of σκηνογραφία, or scene-painting. The abuse of scenical resources to the detriment of real dramatic unity and solidity was one of the chief defects of Euripidean art.

It may here be noticed that Sophocles in the *Trachiniæ* took up the theme of love as a main motive for a drama. By doing so he broke ground in a region that had been avoided, as far as we can judge from extant plays, by Æschylus, and in which Euripides was destined to achieve his greatest triumphs. It is, indeed, difficult to decide the question of precedence between Sophocles and Euripides in the matter. Except on this account the *Trachiniæ* is the least interesting of his tragedies. The whole play seems like a somewhat dull, though conscientious, handling of a fable, in which the poet took but a slight interest. Compared with Medea or with Phædra, Deianeira is tame and lifeless. She makes one fatal and foolish mistake through jealousy, and all is over. Hyllus, too, is a mere *silhouette*, while the contention between him and Herakles about the marriage with Iole, at the end, is frigid. Here, if anywhere, we detect the force of the critique quoted above from Longinus. At the same time the *Trachiniæ* offers many points of interest to the student of Greek sentiment. The phrase ταύτης ὁ δεινὸς ἵμερος is significant, as expressing the pain and forceful energy which the Greeks attributed to passion: nor is the contrast drawn by Deianeira between πόσις and ἀνήρ without value. The motive used by Sophocles in this

* Our imperfect knowledge of the Attic drama prevents our forming any opinion as to the employment of the *deus ex machinâ* by the earlier tragedians.

tragedy was developed by Euripides with a comprehension so far deeper, and with a fulness so far more satisfactory, that the *Hippolytus* and the *Medea* must always take rank above it.

The deepest and most decisive quality in which the tragic art of Sophocles resembled that of Euripides is rhetoric. Sophocles was the first to give its full value to dramatic casuistry, to introduce sophistic altercations, and to set forth all that could be well said in support of a poor argument. A passage on this subject may be quoted from "Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe:"*—

"That is the very thing," said Goethe, "in which Sophocles is a master; and in which consists the very life of the dramatic in general. His characters all possess this gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their action so convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker. One can see that in his youth he enjoyed an excellent rhetorical education, by which he became trained to look for all the reasons and seeming reasons of things. Still, his great talent in this respect betrayed him into faults, as he sometimes went too far."

The special point selected by Goethe for criticism is the celebrated last speech of Antigone:—

"At last, when she is led to death, she brings forward a motive which is quite unworthy, and almost borders on the comic. She says that if she had been a mother she would not have done either for her dead children or for her dead husband what she has done for her brother. 'For,' says she, 'if my husband died I could have had another, and if my children died I could have had others by my new husband. But with my brother the case is different. I cannot have another brother; for since my mother and father are dead there is none to beget one.' This is at least the bare sense of the passage, which, in my opinion, when placed in the mouth of a heroine going to her death, disturbs the tragic tone, and appears to me very far-fetched—to savour too much of dialectical calculation. As I said, I should like a philologist to show us that the passage is spurious."

In truth this last speech of Antigone is exactly what the severer critics of Euripides would have selected in a play of his for condemnation. It exhibits, after all allowance for peculiar Greek sentiments, the rhetorical development of a sophistic

* English Translation, vol. i. p. 371.

thesis. In the simple thought there is pathos. But its elaboration makes it frigid.

Sophocles, though he made the subsequent method of Euripides not only possible but natural by the law of progressive evolution, was very far indeed from disintegrating the tragic structure as Euripides was destined to do. The *deus ex machinâ* of the *Philoctetes*, for example, was only employed because there was absolutely no other way to solve the situation. Rhetoric and wrangling matches were never introduced for their own sake. The choric odes did not degenerate into mere musical interludes. Description and narration in no case took the place of action, by substituting pictures to the ear under conditions where true art required dramatic presentation. It remains the everlasting glory of Sophocles that he realised the mean between Æschylus and Euripides, sacrificing for the sake of his ideal the passionate and enthusiastic extremities of the older dramatist, without imperilling the fabric of Greek tragedy by the suicidal innovations of Euripides. He and he alone knew how to use all forms of art, to express all motives, and to hazard all varieties, with the single purpose of maintaining artistic unity.

What remains to be said about Sophocles, and in particular about his delineation of character, may be introduced in the course of an analysis of his tragedies upon the tale of Thebes.

These three plays do not, like the three plays of Æschylus upon the tale of the Atreidæ, form a trilogy. That is to say, they are not so connected in subject as to form one continued series. A drama, for example, similar to the *Seven against Thebes* might be interpolated between the *Œdipus Coloneüs* and *Antigone;* while the *Œdipus Tyrannus* might have been followed by a tragedy upon the subject of the king's expulsion from Thebes. Nor, again, are they artistically designed as a trilogy. There is no change of form, suggesting the beginning, middle, and ending of a calculated work of art, like that which we notice in the

Oresteia. Moreover, the protagonist is absent from the *Antigone*, and therefore to call the three plays an *Œdipodeia* is impossible. Finally, they were composed at different periods: the *Antigone* is the first extant tragedy of Sophocles; the *Œdipus Coloneüs* is the last.

So much it was necessary to premise in order to avoid the imputation of having treated the three masterpieces of Sophocles as in any true sense a trilogy. The temptation to do so is at first sight almost irresistible; for they are written on the same legend, and the same characters are throughout sustained with firmness, proving that, though Sophocles composed the last play of the series first and the second last of all, he had conceived them in his brain before he undertook to work them out in detail. Or, if this assumption seem unwarranted, we may at least affirm with certainty that at some point of time anterior to the production of the *Antigone*, he had subjected the whole legend of the house of Laius to his plastic imagination, and had given it coherence in his mind. In other words, it was impossible for him to change his point of view about this mythus in the same way as Euripides when he handled that of Helen according to two different versions. It so happens, moreover, that the climax of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* prepares us, by the revolution in the character of the protagonist, for the *Œdipus Coloneüs*, while the last act of the second tragedy, by the prominence given to Antigone, serves as a prelude to the third and final play.

The house of Laius was scarcely less famous among the Greeks than the house of Atreus for its overwhelming disasters, the consequences of an awful curse which rested on the family. Laius, the son of Labdacus, was supposed to have introduced an unnatural vice into Hellas; and from this first crime sprang all the subsequent disasters of his progeny. He took in marriage Jocasta, the sister of Prince Creon, and swayed the State of Thebes. To him an oracle was given that a son of his by

Jocasta should kill him. Yet he did not therefore, in obedience to the divine warning, put away his wife or live in chastity. A boy was born to the royal pair, who gave him to one of their shepherds, after piercing his feet and tying them together, and bound the hind to expose him on Cithæron. Thus they hoped to defeat the will of Heaven. The shepherd, moved by pity, saved the baby's life and handed him over to a friend of his, who used to feed his master's sheep upon the same hill-pastures. This man carried the infant, named Œdipus because of his wounded and swollen feet, to Polybus of Corinth, a childless king, who brought him up as his own son. Œdipus, when he had grown to manhood, was taunted with his obscure birth by his comrades in Corinth. Thereupon he journeyed alone to Delphi to make inquiry concerning his parentage from Phœbus. Phœbus told him nought thereof, but bade him take heed lest he slay his father and wed his mother. Œdipus, deeming that Polybus was his father and Merope his mother, determined to return to Corinth no more. At that time Thebes was troubled with the visitation of the Sphinx, and no man might rede her riddle. Œdipus, passing through the Theban land, was met in a narrow path, where three roads joined, by an old man on a chariot attended by servants. The old man spoke rudely to him, commanding him to make way for his horses, and one of the servants struck him. Whereupon Œdipus slew the master, knowing not that he was his own father Laius, and the men too, all but one, who fled. Thereafter he passed on to Thebes, and solved that riddle of the Sphinx, and the Thebans made him their king, and gave him the lady Jocasta to be his wife. Thus were both the oracles accomplished, and yet Œdipus and Jocasta remained ignorant of their doom. For many years Œdipus ruled Thebes like a great and warlike prince; and to him and Jocasta in wedlock were born two daughters and two sons—Antigone and Ismene, Polyneices and Eteocles. These grew to youth, and a seeming calm of fair weather and pros-

perity abode upon their house. Yet the gods were mindful of the abomination, and in course of time a plague was sent, which ravaged the people of Thebes. Sorely pressed by calamity, Œdipus sent his brother-in-law Creon to inquire at Delphi of the causes of the plague and of the means of staying it. This brings us to the opening of *Œdipus the King*. At this point something should be said about the mythus itself and about the position of the several persons at the commencement of the tragedy.

The fable is obviously one of those which Max Müller and his school describe as solar. Œdipus, who slays his father and weds his mother, may stand for the sun, who slays the night and is married to the dawn. We know how all legends can fall into this mould, and how easy it is to clap the Dawn on to the end of every Greek tale, like the ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν of the *Frogs*. This, however, is nothing to our purpose; for Sophocles had never heard of solar myths. The tale of Thebes supplied him with the subject of three dramas; he used it as a story well suited for displaying passions in their strongest and most tragic workings. As usual, he was not contented with merely following the traditional version of the legend, nor did he insist upon its superstitious elements. That the gods had a grudge against the Labdacidæ, that the oracles given to Laius and Œdipus were not warnings so much as sinister predictions of a doom inevitable, that the very powers who uttered them were bent on blinding the victims of fate to their true import, were thoroughly Greek notions, consistent with the divine φθόνος or envy of Herodotus, and not wholly inconsistent with the gloomy theology of Æschylus. But it was no part of the method of Sophocles to emphasise this horrible doctrine of destiny. On the contrary, he moralised it. While preserving all the essential features of the myth, he made it clear that the characters of men constitute their fatality.

As our own Fletcher has nobly written :—

> Man is his own star, and the soul that can
> Render an honest and a perfect man,
> Commands all light, all influence, all fate ;
> Nothing to him falls early or too late ;
> Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
> Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

What to the vulgar apprehension appears like doom, and to the theologian like the direct interposition of the deity, is to the tragic poet but the natural consequence of moral, physical, and intellectual qualities. These it is his function to set forth in high and stately scenes, commingling with his psychological analysis and forcible dramatic presentation somewhat of the old religious awe.

It may be urged that this is only shifting the burden of necessity, not removing it. It is, perhaps, impossible scientifically to avoid a fatalistic theory of some sort, since in one sense it is true that

> A fishwife hath a fate, and so have I—
> But far above your finding.

Yet practically we do not act upon such theories, and, from the point of view of ethics, there is all the difference in the world between showing how the faults and sins of men must lead them to fearful ends, and painting them in the grip of a remorseless and malignant deity.

Laius was warned that his son by Jocasta would kill him. Yet he begat a son ; and in his presumptuous disregard of heaven, thinking, forsooth, that by mere barbarity a man may cheat the omnipotent, and that the all-seeing cannot save a child of prophecy and doom, he exposed this son upon Cithæron. The boy lived. Thus the crime of Laius is want of self-restraint in the first instance, contempt of God in the second, and cruelty in the third. After this, Œdipus appears upon the theatre of events. He, too, receives oracular warning—that he will slay his sire and wed his mother. Yet, though well aware of the

doubt which rests upon his own birth—for it was just on this account that he went to Delphi—he is satisfied with avoiding his supposed parents. The first man whom he meets, while the words of the oracle are still ringing in his ears, he slays; the first woman who is offered to him in marriage, though old enough to be his mother, he weds. His crime is haste of temper, heat of blood, blind carelessness of the divine decrees. Jocasta shows her guilty infatuation in another form. Not only does she participate in the first sin of Laius; but she forgets the oracle which announced that Laius should be slain by his own son. She makes no inquiry into the causes of his death. She does not investigate the previous history of Œdipus, or observe the marks upon his feet, but weds him heedlessly. Here, indeed, the legend itself involves monstrous improbabilities—as, for instance, that Jocasta, while a widow of a few days, should have been thus wedded to a stranger young enough to be her son, that the Thebans should have made no strict search for the murderer of their king, that Œdipus himself should have heard nothing about the death and funeral of Laius, but should have stepped incuriously into his place and sat upon his throne without asking further questions either of his wife or of his subjects. Previous to the opening of *Œdipus the King* there is, therefore, a whole tissue of absurdities; and to these Aristotle is probably referring when he says: *ἄλογον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τῆς τραγῳδίας, οἷον τὰ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι τῷ Σοφοκλέους.*

Granting this, the vigorous logic wherewith the conclusions are wrought out by Sophocles leaves nothing to be desired on the score of truth to nature. There is, indeed, no work of tragic art which can be compared with the *Œdipus* for the closeness and consistency of the plot. To use the critical terms of the *Poetics*, it would rank first among tragedies for its *μῦθος* and for the *σύστασις πραγμάτων*, even were its *ἤθη* far less firmly traced. The triumph of Sophocles has been,

however, so to connect the ἤθη of his persons with the πράγματα, characters with plot, as to make the latter depend upon the former; and in this kind of ethical causality lies the chief force of his tragic art.

If questioned concerning the situation of events previous to the play of *Œdipus*, it is possible that Sophocles would have pointed out that the ἁμαρτία or error common to all the *dramatis personæ* was an unwarrantable self-confidence. One and all they consult the oracle, and then are satisfied with taking the affairs they had referred to Phœbus into their own hands. Unlike the Orestes of Æschylus, they do not endeavour to act up to the divine commands, and, having done so, place themselves once more beneath the guidance of the god. The oracle is all-important in the three plays on the tale of Thebes, and Sophocles seems to have intended to inculcate a special lesson with regard to the submission of the human will. Those who inquire of a god, and who attempt to thwart his decrees by human skill and foresight, will not prosper. The apparent success of their shifty schemes may cause them to exclaim: "The oracle was false; how weak are those who look for its accomplishment!" Thus they are lured by their self-conceit into impiety. In the end, too, the oracle is found to be fearfully exact. Those, therefore, who take the step of consulting Phœbus, must hold themselves responsible to him, must expect the fulfilment of his prophecy; or if they seek to avert the promised evils, they must, at all events, not do so by criminal contrivances and petty lawlessness, such as man thinks that he may practise upon man. It was thus that Sophocles conceived of the relation of human beings to the deity. He delights in exhibiting the blindness of arrogance and self-confidence, and in showing that characters determined by these qualities rush recklessly to their own doom. At the same time he draws a clear distinction between the man who is hardened in godless folly and one who errs through simple haste. The impiety of

Jocasta ends in suicide. Œdipus, who has been impetuous and self-willed, finds a place for repentance, and survives his worst calamities, to die a god-protected and god-honoured hero.

The opening scene of the *Œdipus* serves a double purpose. While it places the spectators at the exact point in the legend selected by the poet for treatment, it impresses them with the greatness and the majesty of the King. Thebes is worn out with plague. The hand of Heaven lies heavily upon the citizens. Therefore the priest of Zeus approaches the hero who once before had saved them from the Sphinx, and who may now—fit representative of God on earth—find out a remedy for this intolerable evil. Œdipus appears upon the stage, a confident and careful ruler, sublime in the strength of manhood and the consciousness of vast capacity, tender for the afflictions of his people, yet undismayed by their calamity. He is just the man to sustain a commonwealth by his firm character and favouring fortune. Flawless in force of will and singleness of purpose, he seems incapable of failure. To connect the notions of disgrace or guilt or shame with such a king is utterly impossible. Yet, even so, Sophocles has hinted in the speech of Œdipus a something overmuch of confidence and courage:

> Well I know
> That ye all suffer, yet, thus suffering, I
> More than you all in overmeasure suffer:
> For that which wounds you strikes at each man singly,
> At each and not another; while my soul
> For Thebes, for me, for you, feels one huge sorrow.

Even here the irony, for which the play is famous, begins to transpire. Œdipus believes that his grief is sympathy for a vexed people committed to his charge. Little does he know that, while he is pluming himself upon his watchful care for others, he himself is the head and front of all offending. In the word κἀμέ, almost negligently uttered, lies the kernel of

the future revelation. While he is informing the suppliants that Creon has gone to Delphi for advice, the prince arrives. A garland of good augury is on his brow; and in this sign of an auspicious embassy we discern another stroke of tragic irony. Phœbus has declared that the presence in Thebes of the hitherto unpunished, unregarded murderer of Laius is the cause of the plague. Œdipus, when he fully understands the matter, swears to discover the offender. The curse which he pronounces on this guilty man is terrible—terrible in its energy of interdiction and excommunication from all rites of hospitality, from human sympathy, from earth and air and water and the fruits of the field—but still more terrible through the fact that all these maledictions are uttered on his own head. The irony of the situation—if we are justified in giving this word to the contrast between what seems and what really is—between Œdipus as he appears to the burghers, and Œdipus as he is known to us—rises in the emphatic eloquence of his denunciation to a truly awful height. At the same time his obvious sincerity enlists our sympathy upon his side. We feel beforehand that the man who speaks thus, will, when his eyes are opened, submit to his self-imprecated doom. It now remains to detect the murderer. Thinking that his faculty of divination may be useful, Œdipus has already sent for the blind seer Teiresias. Teiresias is one of the great creations of Sophocles. Twice he appears, once in this play, once in the *Antigone*, each time in conflict with infatuated kings. He is so aged, and the soul within him is so fixed on things invisible, that he seems scarcely human. We think of him as of one who dwells apart, not communing in ordinary social ways with men, but listening to the unspoken words of God, and uttering his wisdom in dark parable to those who heed him not. The Greek poets frequently exhibited the indifference of prosperous persons to divine monitions. Cassandra's prophecies were not attended to; the Delphic oracle spoke in

vain; and Teiresias is only honoured when it is too late. Sophocles, while maintaining the mysterious fascination of the soothsayer, has marked his character by some strong touches of humanity. He is proud and irritable to excess. His power of sarcasm is appalling, and his indignation is inexorable. Between two stubborn and unyielding natures like the seer and King, sparks of anger could not fail to be struck; the explosion that follows on their meeting serves to display the choleric temper of Œdipus, which formed the main trait of his character, the pith of his ἁμαρτία.

Œdipus greets Teiresias courteously, telling him that he, the King, is doing all he can to find the murderer of Laius, and that the soothsayer must spare no pains. To this generous patronage and protective welcome, Teiresias, upon whose sightless soul the truth has suddenly flashed, answers with deep sighs, and requests to be led home again. This naturally nettles Œdipus. The hastiness that drew him into his first fault renders him now ungovernable. Teiresias keeps saying it will be better for the King to remain ignorant, and the King retorts that he is only a blind dotard; were he not blind, he, and no other, might be suspected of the murder. This provokes an oracular response:

> Ay! Is it so? I bid thee, then, abide
> By thy first ordinance, and from this day
> Join not in converse with these men or me,
> Being thyself this land's impure defiler.

Thus the real state of affairs is suddenly disclosed; and were Œdipus of a submissive temper he would immediately have proceeded to the discovery of the truth. This would, however, have destroyed the drama, and have prevented the unfolding of the character of the King. Instead, therefore, of heeding the seer's words, Œdipus rushes at once to the conclusion that Creon and Teiresias are plotting to overthrow him in his tyranny. The quarrel waxes hot. Each word

uttered by Teiresias is pregnant with terrific revelation. The whole context of events, past, present, and future, is painted with intense lucidity in speech that has the trenchant force of oracular conviction; yet Œdipus remains so firmly rooted in his own integrity and in the belief which he has suddenly assumed of Creon's treason, that he turns deaf ears and a blind soul to the truth. At last the seer leaves him with this denunciation:

> I tell thee this: the man whom thou so long
> Seekest with threats and mandates for the murder
> Of Laius, that very man is here,
> By name an alien, but in season due
> He shall be shown true Theban, and small joy
> Shall have therein; for, blind, instead of seeing,
> And poor, who once was rich, he shall go forth,
> Staff-guided, groping, o'er a foreign land.
> He shall be shown to be with his own children
> Brother and sire in one, of her who bore him
> Husband at once and offspring, of his father
> Bedmate and murderer. Go; take now these words
> Within, and weigh them; if thou find me false,
> Say then that divination taught me nothing.

The next scene is one of altercation between Œdipus and Creon. Œdipus, full of rage, still haunted by the suspicion of treason, yet stung to the quick by some of the dark speeches of the prophet, vehemently assails the prince, and condemns him to exile. Creon—who, of course, is innocent, but who is not meant to have a generous or lofty soul—defends himself in a dry and argumentative manner, until Jocasta comes forth from the palace and seeks to quell their conflict. Œdipus tells her haughtily that he is accused of being the murderer of Laius. She begins her answer with a frivolous and impious assertion that all oracles are nonsense. The oracle uttered against Laius came to nothing, for his son died on Mount Cithæron, and robbers slew him near Thebes long afterwards, where three ways meet. These words, ἐν τριπλαῖς ἀμαξιτοῖς, stir suspicion

in the mind of Œdipus. He asks at once: "Where was the spot?" "In Phokis, where one goes to Delphi and to Daulia." "What was Laius like?" "Not unlike you in shape," says Jocasta, "but white-haired." "Who were with him?" "Five men, and he rode a chariot." "Who told you all this?" "One who escaped, and who begged me afterwards to send him from the palace, and who now keeps a farm of ours in the country." Each answer adds to the certainty in the mind of Œdipus that it was Laius whom he slew. The only hope left is to send for the servant, and to find out whether he adheres to his story of there having been more robbers than one. If he remains firm upon this point, and does not confess that it was one solitary man who slew his master and his comrades, then there is a chance that he, the King, may not be guilty. Jocasta, with her usual levity, comforts him by insisting that he spoke of robbers in the plural, and that he must not be suffered to retract his words.

While they are waiting for the servant, a messenger arrives from Corinth with good news. Polybus, the king, is dead, and Œdipus is proclaimed his successor. "Where now," shouts impious Jocasta, "are your oracles—that you should slay your father? See you not how foolish it is to trust to Phœbus and to auguries of birds? Chance is the lord of all. Let us, therefore, live our lives as best we can." Awful is the irony of these short-sighted jubilations; and awful, as Aristotle has pointed out,* is the irony which makes this messenger of apparently good tidings add the last link to the chain of evidence that will overwhelm Œdipus with ruin. Œdipus exclaims: "Though my father is dead, I may not return to Corinth: Merope still lives." "What," says the messenger, "do you fear her because she is your mother? Set your mind at ease. She is no mother of yours, nor was Polybus your father. I gave you to them as a gift when you were yet an infant." "Where did you

* *Poetics*, xi.

find me?". cries the King. "Upon Cithæron: a shepherd of the house of Laius gave you to me; your feet were pierced, and I believe that you were born in the royal household." Terrible word, Cithæron! It echoes through this tragedy with horror—its scaurs and pastures the scene of the first crime. And now those two hinds, who had met there once apparently by chance with the child of doom between them, are being again, as though by chance, brought face to face with the man of doom between them, in order to make good the words of Teiresias:

> *βοῆς δὲ τῆς σῆς ποῖος οὐκ ἔσται λιμὴν,*
> *ποῖος Κιθαιρὼν οὐχὶ σύμφωνος τάχα;*

Jocasta is struck dumb by the answers of the messenger. She, and she alone, knows now at last the whole truth; but she does not speak, while Œdipus continues asking who the shepherd of the house of Laius was. Then she utters words of fearful import, praying the King to go no further, nor to seek what, found, will plunge his soul into despair like hers. After this, finding her suit ineffectual, she retires into the palace. The Chorus are struck by the wildness of her gestures, and hint their dread that she is going to her doom of suicide. But Œdipus, not yet fully enlightened, and preoccupied with the problem which interests himself so deeply, only imagines that she shrinks from the possible proof of his base birth. As yet he does not suspect that he is the own son of Laius; and here, it may be said in passing, the sole weakness of the plot transpires. Neither the oracle first given to him at Delphi, nor the plain speech of Teiresias, nor the news of the Corinthian messenger, nor the pleadings of Jocasta, are sufficient to suggest the real truth to his mind. Such profundity of blindness is dramatically improbable. He is, however, soon destined to receive illumination. The servant of Laius, who gave Jocasta intelligence of the manner of her husband's death, is now brought upon the stage; and in him the Corin-

thian messenger recognises the same shepherd who had given him the infant on Cithæron. Though reluctant to confess the truth so long concealed, the shepherd is at last forced to reveal all he knows; and in this supreme moment Œdipus discovers that he is not only the murderer of his own father, but also that Jocasta is his mother. In the madness of this revelation he rushes to the palace. The Chorus are left alone to moralise upon these terrible events. Then another messenger arrives. Jocasta has hanged herself within her bedchamber. Œdipus, breaking bars and bolts in the fire of his despair, has followed her. Around him were the servants, drawn together by the tumult. None, however, dared approach him. Led by an inner impulse, he found the place where his wife and mother hung, released the corpse, and tearing from her dress the golden buckles, cut out both his eyes, crying aloud that no longer should they look upon the light or be witness to his woe, seeing that when they might have aided him they were as good as blind. Thus one day turned the prosperity of Œdipus to "wailing, woe, death, disgrace, all evils that have name—not one is absent." The speech of the messenger narrating these events is a splendid instance of the energy of Sophocles, when he chooses to describe a terrible event appallingly. It does not convey the Æschylean mystery of brooding horror; but the scene is realised in all its incidents, briefly, vividly, with ghastly clearness. Meanwhile, the voice of Œdipus himself is heard. He bids the palace-doors be opened, in order that all Thebes may see the parricide, the monster of unhallowed indescribable abominations. So the gates are rolled asunder: and there lies dead Jocasta; and sightless Œdipus, with bloody cheeks and beard, stands over her, and the halls are filled with wailing women and woe-stricken men.

Here, if this had been a modern tragedy, the play of *Œdipus Tyrannus* might have ended; but so abrupt and scenical a conclusion did not suit the art of Sophocles. He

had still further to develop the character of Œdipus, and to offer the prospect of that future reconciliation between the fate and the passions of his hero which he had in store. For this purpose the last two hundred lines of the drama, though they do not continue the plot, but rather suggest a new and secondary subject of interest, are invaluable. Hitherto we have seen Œdipus in the pride of monarchy and manhood, hasty, arrogant, yet withal a just and able ruler. He is now, through a περιπέτεια, or revolution of circumstances, more complete than any other in Greek tragedy, revealed in the very depths of his calamity, still dignified. There is no resistance left in the once so strong and stubborn man. The hand of God, weighing heavily upon him, has bowed his head, and he is humble as a little child. Yet the vehemence that marked his former phase persists. It finds vent in the passionate lucidity wherewith he examines all the details of the pollution he has unwittingly incurred, and in the rage with which he demands to have his own curse carried out against him. Let him be cast from the city, sent forth to wander on the fells of Cithæron—οὐμὸς Κιθαίρων οὗτος. It was the highest achievement of tragic art to exhibit so suddenly and by so sharp a transition this new development of the King's nature. Saul of Tarsus, when blinded by the vision, was not more immediately converted from one mood into another, more contrite in profound sincerity of sorrow. Still in the altered Œdipus we see the same man, the same temperament; though all internal and external circumstances have been changed, so that henceforward he will never tread the paths of life as once he did. The completeness of his self-abandonment appears most vividly in the dialogue with Creon, upon whose will his immediate fate depends. When Creon, whom he had lately misjudged and treated with violent harshness, comes and greets him kindly, the wretched King tastes the very bitterness of degradation, yet he is not abject. He only prays once more, with intensest urgency of

pleading, to have the uttermost of the excommunication he had vowed, executed upon his head. Thinking less of himself than of the miserable beings associated with him in disaster, he beseeches Creon to inter the Queen, and, for his boys, to give them only a fair chance in life—they will be men, and may carve out their own fortunes in the world; but for his two poor girls, left desolate, a scorn and mockery to all men, he can only pray that they may come to him, be near him, bear the burden of their misery by their father's side. The tenderness of Œdipus for Ismene and Antigone, his yearning to clasp them, is terribly—almost painfully—touching, when we remember who they were, how born, the children of what curses. The words with which the King addresses them are even hazardous in their directness. Yet it was needful that humanity should by some such strain of passion be made to emerge from this tempest of soul-shattering woes; and thus, too, a glimpse of that future is provided which remained for Œdipus, if sorrowful, assuaged at least by filial love. In reply to all his eloquent supplications Creon answers that he will not take upon himself the responsibility of dealing with his case. Nothing can be done without consulting the oracle at Delphi. Œdipus has, therefore, to be patient and endure. The strong hero, who saved Thebes from the Sphinx and swayed the city, is now in the hands of tutors and governors awaiting his doom. He submits quietly, and the tragedy is ended.

The effect of such a tragedy as *Œdipus the King* is to make men feel that the earth is shaken underneath them, and that the heavens above are big with thunder. Compassion and fear are agitated in the highest degree; old landmarks seem to vanish; the mightiest have fallen, and the most impious, convinced of God, have been goaded to self-murder. Great indeed is the tragic poet's genius who can make the one sure point amid this confusion the firmness of its principal foredestined victim. That is the triumph of Sophocles. Out of the chaos of the *Œdipus*

Tyrannus springs the new order of the *Œdipus Coloneüs:* and here it may be said that perhaps the most valid argument in favour of the Æschylean trilogy as a supreme work of dramatic art is this—that such a tragedy as the first Œdipus demanded such another as the second. The new motives suggested in the last act were not sufficiently worked out to their conclusion; much that happened in the climax of the *Tyrannus* seemed to necessitate the *Coloneüs.*

The interest of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* centres in its plot, and that is my only excuse for having dwelt so long on the structure of a play familiar to every student. That of the *Œdipus Coloneüs* is different. It has, roughly speaking, no plot. It owes its perfect, almost superhuman, beauty to the atmosphere which bathes it, as with peace after tempest, with the lucid splendours of sunset succeeding to a storm-vexed and tumultuous day. The scene is laid, as the name indicates, in the village birthplace of the poet. Years are supposed to have elapsed since the conclusion of the former tragedy; Œdipus, after being detained in Thebes against his will at first, has now been driven forth by Creon, and has wandered many miles in blindness, led by his daughter's hand. The ethical interest of the play, so far as it is not absorbed by Œdipus himself, centres principally in Antigone, whereby we are prepared for her emergence into fullest prominence in the tragedy which bears her name. Always keeping in mind that these three plays are not a trilogy, I cannot but insist again that much is lost, especially in all that concerns the unfolding of Antigone's character, by not reading them in the order suggested by the fable. At the same time, though Antigone engrosses our sympathy and attention, Sophocles has varied the drama by a more than usual number of persons. The generous energy of Theseus forms a fine contrast to the inactivity forced upon Œdipus by the conditions of the subject, and also to the meanness of Creon; while the episodes of Ismene's arrival, of Antigone's abduction,

and of the visit of Polyneices, add movement to what might else have been too stationary. It should also be said that all these subsidiary sources of interest are used with subtle art by Sophocles for enhancing the dignity of Œdipus, for arousing our sympathy with him, and for bringing into prominence the chief features of his character. None can, therefore, be regarded as superfluous, though, strictly speaking, they might have been detached without absolute destruction of the drama, which is more than can be said about the slightest incidents of *Œdipus Tyrannus*. As regards Œdipus himself, that modification of his fiery temperament which Sophocles revealed at the end of the first tragedy, has now become permanent. He is schooled into submission; yet he has not lost the old impetuosity that formed the groundwork of his nature. He is still quick to anger and vehement in speech, but both his anger and his vehemence are justified by the occasion. Something, moreover, of fateful and mysterious, severing him from the common race of men and shrouding him within the seclusion of his dread calamity, has been added. The terror of his dreadful past, and the prospect of his august future, environ him with more than kingly dignity. The skill of Sophocles as a dramatic poet is displayed in all its splendour by the new light thrown upon the central figure of Œdipus. The effect of unity is not destroyed: those painful shocks to our sense of probability, so frequent when inferior dramatists—poets of the rank of Fletcher or of Jonson—attempt to depict a nature altered by internal reformation or by force of circumstance, do not occur. The Œdipus of both the tragedies remains one man; we understand the change that has been wrought in him; and while we feel that it is adequate and natural, we marvel at the wisdom of the poet who could vary his design with so much firmness.

The oracle, which continues to play an important part in this tale of Thebes, has warned Œdipus that he will end his days within the precincts of the Semnai Theai, or august god-

desses of retribution. In his new phase the man of haste and wrath is no longer heedless of oracles; nor does he let their words lie idle in his mind. It is, therefore, with a strong presentiment of approaching death that he discovers early in this play that his feet, led by Antigone, have rested in the grove of the Furies at Colonus. The place itself is fair. There are here no Harpy-Gorgons with bloodshot eyes, and vipers twining in their matted hair. The meadows are dewy, with crocus-flowers and narcissus; in the thickets of olive and laurel nightingales keep singing; and rivulets spread coolness in the midst of summer's heat. The whole wood is hushed, and very fresh and wild. A solemn stillness broods there; for the feet of the profane keep far away, and none may tread the valley-lawns but those who have been purified. The ransomed of the Lord walk there. This solemnity of peace pervades the whole play, forming, to borrow a phrase from painting, the silver-grey harmony of the picture. In thus bringing Œdipus to die among the unshowered meadows of those Dread Ladies, whom in his troubled life he found so terrible, but whom in his sublime passage from the world he is about to greet resignedly, we may trace peculiar depth of meaning. The thought of death, calm but austere, tempers every scene in the drama. We are in the presence of one whose life is ended, who is about to merge the fever of existence in the tranquillity beyond. This impression of solemnity is heightened when we remember that the poet wrote the *Coloneüs* in extreme old age. Over him too the genius of everlasting repose already spread wings in the twilight, and the mysteries of the grave were nearer to him and more daily present than to other men.

A country fellow, who perceives Œdipus seated by his daughter on a marble bench within the sacred precinct, bids them quit the spot; for it is hallowed. Œdipus, however, knowing that his doom shall be fulfilled, asks that he may be confronted with the elders of the place. They come and gaze with

mingled feelings of distrust and awe on the blind hero, august in desolation. Before they can converse with him, Œdipus has to quit the recesses of the grove, and gain a spot where speech and traffic are permitted. Then, in answer to their questions, he informs them who he is—Œdipus. At that name they start back in horror, demanding that he shall carry the abomination of his presence from their land. This affords the occasion for a splendid speech from the old man, one of the most telling passages of eloquence in Sophocles, in which he appeals to the time-long hospitality and fame for generosity of Athens. Athens was never known to spurn the suppliant or expel the stranger, and the deeds of Œdipus they so much dread, are sufferings rather :

ἐπεὶ τά γ' ἔργα μου
πεπονθότ' ἐστι μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα.

The Chorus, moved by the mingled impetuosity and sound reasoning of their suitor, perceive that the case is too grave for them to decide. Accordingly, they send a messenger for Theseus; but before he can be summoned, Ismene arrives on horseback with the news that her brothers are quarrelling about the throne of Thebes. Eteocles, the younger, has usurped the sovereignty, while Polyneices has fled to Argos to engage the chiefs of the Achaians in his cause. Both parties, meantime, are eager to secure the person of Œdipus, since an oracle has proclaimed that with him will victory abide. Œdipus, hearing these tidings, bursts into a strain of passionate denunciation, which proves that the old fire of his temper is smouldering still unquenched. When he was forlorn and in misery, his unnatural sons took no thought of him. They sent him forth to roam, a pariah upon the earth, leaving to his daughters the care and burden of supporting him. Now, basely anxious for their selfish profit, they come to claim possession of his old, world-wearied flesh. Instead of blessings, they shall meet with curses. Instead of the fair land of Thebes to lord it over,

they shall barely get enough ground to die and be buried in. He, meanwhile, will abide at Athens, and bequeath a heritage of help and honour to her soil.

The Chorus now call upon Œdipus to perform the rites of purification required by the Eumenides—rites which Sophocles has described with the loving minuteness of one to whom the customs of Colonus were from boyhood sacred. Ismene goes to carry out their instructions, and in her absence Theseus arrives upon the scene. Theseus, throughout the drama, plays toward Œdipus the part of a good-hearted, hospitable friend. His generosity is ethically contrasted with the meanness of Creon and the selfishness of Polyneices, while, artistically, the practical energy of his character serves for a foil to the stationary dignity of the chief actor. Sophocles has thus contrived to give weight and importance to a personage who might, in weaker hands, have been degraded into a mere instrument. Œdipus assures the Attic king that he will prove no useless and unserviceable denizen. The children of Erechtheus, whose interests rank first in the mind of Theseus, will find him in the future a powerful and god-protected sojourner within their borders. His natural sympathy for the persecuted and oppressed having been thus strengthened by the prospect of reciprocal advantage, Theseus formally accepts Œdipus as a suppliant, and promises him full protection. At this point, forming as it were a halting-place in the action of the play, Sophocles introduced that famous song about Colonus, which no one has yet succeeded in translating, but which, for modern ears, has received new value from the music of Mendelssohn.

What follows, before the final climax of the drama, consists of the efforts made by Creon, on the part of Eteocles, and by Polynices, to enlist Œdipus respectively upon their sides in the war of succession to the Theban throne. Creon displays his heartless, cunning, impudent, sophistical, and forceful

character, while Œdipus opposes indignation and contempt, unmasking his hypocrisy, and stripping his specious arguments of all that hides their naked selfishness. In this scene we feel that Sophocles is verging upon the Euripidean manner. A little more would make the altercation between Creon and Œdipus pass over into a forensic wrangling match. As it is, the chief dramatic value of the episode is to exhibit the grandeur of the wrath of Œdipus in its righteous heat when contrasted with the wretched shifts of a mere rhetorical sophist.

After Creon, by the help of Theseus, has been thwarted in his attempt to carry off Antigone, Polyneices approaches with crocodile tears, fawning intercessions, and fictitious sorrow for his father's desolation. Œdipus flashes upon his covert egotism the same light of clear unclouded insight which had unmasked Creon. "What," he asks, "is the value of tears now, of prayers now? Dry were your eyes, hard as stone your heart, dumb your lips, when I went forth from Thebes unfriended. Here is your guerdon: before Thebes' walls you shall die, pierced by your brother's hand, and your brother by yours." The imprecation of the father upon the son would be unnatural, were it not for the son's falseness, who behaved like a Regan to Œdipus in his calamity, and who now, when the old man has become a mysteriously important personage, seeks to make the most of him for his own uses.

The protracted dialogues with Creon and Polyneices serve to enhance the sublimity of Œdipus. He, all the while, is seated, a blind, travel-stained, neglected mendicant, upon the marble bench of the Eumenides. There is horror in his very aspect. Hellas rings with the abominations connected with his name. Yet, to this poor pariah, to this apparent object of pity and loathing, come princes and warriors capable of stirring all the States of Greece in conflict. He rejects them, firm in his consciousness of heaven-appointed destiny.

Sophocles seems bent on showing how the wrath of God may be turned aside from its most signal and notorious victims by real purity of heart and nobleness of soul; how, from the depths of degradation and affliction, the spirit of man may rise; and how the lot of demigods may be reserved for those whom the world ignorantly judges worthy of its scorn. Œdipus of late stood like the lightning-blasted tree that travellers dread—the *evitand umbidental* of Roman superstition. His withered limbs have now more health and healing in them than the leaf-embowered forest oak.

The treatment of Polyneices in the *Œdipus Coloneüs* supplies a good example of the Sophoclean tendency to humanise the ancient myths of Hellas. The curse pronounced by Œdipus formed an integral element of that portion of the legend which suggested to Æschylus the *Seven against Thebes.* By its force, the whole weight of the doom that overhangs the house of Laius is brought to bear upon the suicidal brethren, both of whom rush helplessly, with eyes open, to meet inevitable fate.

> ὦ Ζεῦ τε καὶ Γῆ καὶ πολισσοῦχοι θεοί,
> Ἀρά τ' Ἐρινὺς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής

are the opening words of the prayer of Eteocles in that tragedy; while phrases like these, ὦ πόνοι δόμων νέοι παλαιοῖσι συμμιγεῖς κακοῖς and ὦ μέλαινα καὶ τελεία γένεος Οἰδίπου τ' ἀρά, form the burden of the choric songs. Sophocles does not seek to make the wrath of Œdipus less terrible; he adheres to the old outline of the story, and heightens the tragic horror of the curse by framing for it words intense by reason of their very calculated calmness (1383–1396). At the same time he shows how the obstinate temper of Polyneices, and his sense of honour, are necessary to its operation. After the dreadful sentence, dooming him to self-murder by his brother's spear, has been pronounced, Polyneices stands before

his father and his sister like one stunned. Antigone, with a woman's instinct, entreats him to choose the only way still left of safety. He may disband the army, and retire from the adventure against Thebes. To this her brother answers :

ἀλλ' οὐχ οἷόν τε. πῶς γὰρ αὖθις ἂν πάλιν
στράτευμ' ἄγοιμι ταὐτὸν εἰσάπαξ τρέσας;

When she persists, he repeats μὴ πείθ' ἃ μὴ δεῖ. Thus, instead of bringing into strong relief the operation of blind fate, Sophocles places in the foreground the human agencies which contribute to the undoing of Polyneices. His crime of unfilial egotism, his dread of being thought a coward, and his honour rooted in dishonour, drive him through the tempest of his father's curse upon the rock of doom. The part played by Antigone in this awful scene of altercation between her father and her brother, first interceding for mercy, and then striving to break the stubborn will of the rebellious youth,* prepares our minds for the tragedy in which she will appear as protagonist. Hitherto she has been remarkable for filial love. She now shows herself a gentle and tender sister to one who had deeply wronged her. The absolute unselfishness, which gives to her the beauty as of some clear flawless jewel, shines forth by anticipation in the *Coloneüs*, enlisting our warmest sympathies upon her side and tempering the impression of hardness that might be produced by a simple study of the *Antigone.*

When Polyneices, with the curse still ringing in his ears, has fled forth, Cain-like, from the presence of his father, thunder is heard, and the end approaches. The chief actors, led by the blind hero, move from the stage in order suited to the processional gravity of the Greek theatre, while the speech of the Messenger, conveying to the Chorus the news of the last minutes in the life of Œdipus, prepares the spectators for the reappear-

* See especially 1181–1203, 1414–1443.

ance of his daughters on the scene. As in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, so now a new motive of interest is introduced in the last act of the drama. The *Antigone* is imperatively demanded as a sequel. Our attention is riveted upon Antigone, who in losing her father has lost all. Her first thought is that he died nobly, peacefully, at one with God. Her next thought is that she shall never see him again, never more bear the sweet burden of anxiety and pain for him, never even have access to his hidden tomb. Her third thought is a longing to be dead with him, enfolded in oblivion of the fate which persecutes her kith and kin. Life stretches before her boundless, homeless, comfortless, nor has she now a single memory for him whose love might have consoled a woman of less stubborn soul, for Hæmon. It is characteristic of his whole conception of Antigone that Sophocles introduced no allusion to that underplot of love at this point. When Theseus reproves her for despair, she awakes to fresh unselfishness: "Send me to Thebes," she cries, "that I may stay, if possible, my brothers' strife." Throughout this final scene the single-hearted heat and firm will of Antigone, her desire for action, and her readiness to accept responsibility are contrasted with Ismene's yielding temper and passivity. We are thus prepared for the opening of the third drama, which, though written first by Sophocles, is the artistic close and climax of the tale of Thebes.

The most perfect female character in Greek poetry is Antigone. She is purely Greek, unlike any woman of modern fiction, except perhaps the Fedalma of George Eliot. In her filial piety, in her intercession for Polyneices at the knees of Œdipus, in her grief when her father is taken from her, she does indeed resemble the women whom most men among us have learned to honour in their sisters or their daughters or their mother. Of such women the Greek maiden, with her pure calm face and virginal straight lines of classic drapery, is still the saint and patroness. But what shall we say of the Antigone of this

last drama, of the sister who is willing, lest her brother lie unburied on the Theban plain, to lay her own life down, disobeying the law of her sovereign, defying Creon to the face, appealing against unjust tribunals to the judgment-seat of powers more ancient than the throne of Zeus himself, and marching to her living tomb with dauntless strength in order that the curse-attainted ghost of Polyneices shall have rest in Hades? To the modern mind she appears a being from another sphere. A strain of unearthly music seems to announce her entrance and her exit on the stage. That the sacrifice of the sister's very life, the breaking of her plighted troth to Hæmon, should follow upon the sprinkling of those few handfuls of dust —that she should give that life up smilingly, nor ever in her last hours breathe her lover's name—is a tragic circumstance for which our sympathies are not prepared: we can neither divest our minds of the fixed modern prejudice that the first duty of a woman is to her husband, nor can we fully enter into the antique superstition of defrauded sepulture. Yet it is necessary to do both of these things, to sequester Antigone from the sphere of modern obligations, and to enter hand in hand with her the inner sanctuary of antique piety, in order to do justice to the conception of Sophocles. This effort of the imagination may be facilitated by remembering first, that Antigone inherited her father's proud self-will—

> δηλοῖ τὸ γέννημ' ὠμὸν ἐξ ὠμοῦ πατρὸς
> τῆς παιδός· εἴκειν δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται κακοῖς—

and secondly, that disaster after disaster, the loss of Œdipus, the death of her two brothers, has come huddling upon her in a storm of fate, so that life is in a manner over for her, and she feels isolated in a cold and cruel world. This combination of her character and her circumstances renders her action in the *Antigone* conceivable. Without the hardness she inherited from Œdipus, she could not have gone through her tragic part. Without the vow she registered above her father's grave, to

bring help to her brethren, seeing that they alone were left, the sentiment of her last speech would sound rhetorical. Moreover, the poet who breathed into her form a breath of life so fiery, has himself justified us in regarding her act as one removed from the plain path of virtue. Antigone was no Hindhu widow to die upon a husband's pyre. Her heroism, her resistance offered to the will of Creon, had in it a splendid criminality. It was just the casuistry of the conflict between public and private obligations, between the dictates of her conscience and the commands of her sovereign, that enabled Sophocles to render the peculiar stoicism of her character pathetic. In spite of all these considerations, it is probable that she will strike a modern reader at the first as frigid. Especially if he have failed to observe the *nuances* of her portrait in the *Œdipus Coloneüs*, he will be inclined to wish that Sophocles had softened here and there the outlines of her adamantine statue. Yet, after long contemplation of those perfect lineaments, we come to recognise in her a purity of passion, a fixity of purpose, a loyalty of kinship, a sublime enthusiasm for duty, simply conceived and self-justified in spite of all conventions to the contrary, which soar above the strain of modern tragic sentiment. Even Alfieri, in the noble drawing he has sketched from the Sophoclean picture, could not abstain from violating its perfection by this sentimental touch of common feeling :—

> Emone, ah ! tutto io sento,
> Tutto l' amor, che a te portava : io sento
> Il dolor tutto, a cui ti lascio.

No such words are to be found in Sophocles upon the lips of the dying Antigone. She is all for her father and her brothers. The tragedy of Hæmon belongs to Creon, not to her. Her furthest concessions to the sympathies which might have swayed a weaker woman, are found in this line,

> ὦ φίλταθ' Αἷμον, ὡς σ' ἀτιμάζει πατήρ,

and in the passage of the Kommos where she bewails her luckless lot of maidenhood. For the rest, Sophocles has sustained her character as that of one "whom, like sparkling steel, the strokes of chance made hard and firm." This steely durability, this crystalline sparkle, divide her not only from the ideal raised by romance for womanhood, but distinguish her as the daughter of Œdipus from the general sisterhood even of Greek heroines.

The peculiar qualities of Antigone are brought into sharp relief by the milder virtues of Ismene, who thinks it right to obey Creon, and who has no spirit for the deed of daring, but who is afterwards eager to share the punishment of her sister. Antigone repels her very sternly, herein displaying the force of her nature under its less amiable aspect: "Have courage! Thou livest, but my soul long since hath died." The glory of the act is hers alone. Ismene has no right to share it when the risks are past, the penalty is paid. Antigone's repulsion of her sister seems to supply the key to her own heroism. "Œdipus," she says, "is dead; my brethren are dead: for them I lived, and in their death I died to life; but you—your heart is not shut up within your father's and your brothers' grave; it is still warm, still eager for love and the joys of this world. Live, then. For me it would be no more possible to live such life as yours, than for the clay-cold corpse upon the bier."

The character of Creon, darkened in its tone and shadow to the utmost with a view to affording a foil of another species for Antigone, was thought worthy of minute and careful treatment by Sophocles. In the *Œdipus Tyrannus* he is wronged rather than wronging. While suffering from the unjust suspicion and hasty language of the King, he pleads his cause with decent gravity and shows no sign of either arrogance or cowardice. At the end, when Œdipus has fallen, his own behaviour is such as would not disgrace a generous as well as prudent prince. The neutrality for good or evil which distinguishes

Creon in this play, marking him out in contrast with the fiery heat of Œdipus, the impious irony of Jocasta, is, to say the least, respectable. In the *Œdipus Coloneüs* he plays a consistently mean and odious part; his pragmatical display of rhetoric before the burghers of Colonus, when tested by his violent and cruel conduct toward Antigone, proves him to be a hollow-hearted and specious hypocrite. The light here reflected back upon his respectability in the *Tyrannus* is decidedly unfavourable. In the *Antigone* Creon becomes, if possible, still more odious; only our animosity against him is tempered by contempt. To the faults of egotism, hardness, and hypocritical prating, are now added the infatuation of self-will and the godless hatred of a dead foe. There is, indeed, a show of right in the decree published concerning the two brothers, one of whom had brought a foreign army against Thebes; but it would be sophistry to maintain that Creon was actuated by patriotic motives. The defeat and death of Polyneices were punishment enough. By pursuing his personal spite beyond the grave Creon insults the common instincts of humanity, the sympathies of the people, and the supposed feelings of the gods, who cannot bear to gaze upon abominations. The pathetic self-devotion of Antigone, the voice of the city, the remonstrances of Hæmon, and the warnings of Teiresias are all thrown away upon his stubborn and conceited obstinacy. He shows himself, in short, to be a tyrant of the orthodox sort. Like a tyrant, he is moreover absurdly suspicious: the guardian has, he thinks, been bought; Ismene must be hatching treason; Hæmon prefers a woman to his duty; Teiresias is plotting for the sake of gain against him. When it is just too late, he gives way helplessly and feebly, moved to terror by the dark words of the seer. Creon is, therefore, a mixed character, great neither for good nor for evil, weak through wilfulness, plausible in words and wavering in his determinations, a man who might have passed for excellent if he had never had to wield a kingdom's

power. His own description of himself—μάταιον ἄνδρα—suits him not only in the utter collapse of his character and ruin of his fortunes, but also in the height of his prosperity and fulness of his seeming strength.

Sophocles might fairly be censured for having made the misery of Creon the climax of a drama which ought to have had its whole interest centred in Antigone. Our sympathies have not been sufficiently enlisted on the side of Hæmon to make us care much about his death. For Eurydice it is impossible to rouse more than a languid pity. Creon, we feel, gets no more than he deserves; instead of being sorry for him, we are only angry that he was not swept away into the dustheap of oblivion sooner. It was surely a mistake to divert the attention of the audience, at the very end of the tragedy, from its heroine to a character which, like that of Creon, rouses impatient scorn as well as antipathy. That Sophocles had artistic reasons for not concluding this play with the death of Antigone, may be readily granted by those who have made the crises of the *Ajax*, the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, and the *Œdipus Coloneüs* the subject of special study. He preferred, it seems, to relax the strained sympathies of his audience by a prolongation of the drama on an altered theme. Yet this scarcely justifies the shifting of the centre of interest attempted in the *Antigone*. We have to imagine that the inculcation of a moral lesson upon the crime of ἀσέβεια was the poet's paramount object.* If so, he sacrificed dramatic effect to ethics.

It should be noticed that Antigone, in whom the fate of the family of Laius is finally accomplished, falls an innocent victim. Her tragedy is no immediate consequence of the Œdipodean

* The last six lines spoken by the Chorus seem to justify this view. A couplet from the *Pheræi* of Moschion might be inscribed as a motto upon the *Antigone*:—

κενὸν θανόντος ἀνδρὸς αἰκίζειν σκιάν·
ζῶντας κολάζειν οὐ θανόντας εὐσεβές.

curse. While her brethren were wilfully involved in the doom of their house, she perished in the cause of divine charity. Finding that the immutable ordinances of heaven clashed with the arbitrary volition of a ruler, she preferred to obey the law of conscience and to die at the behest of a pride-maddened tyrant. She is technically disobedient, morally most duteous. Thus the *Antigone* carries us beyond the region of hereditary disaster into the more universal sphere of ethical casuistry. Its tragic interest depends less upon the evolution of the law of ancestral guilt than on the conflict of two duties. By suggesting the casuistical question to his audience, while he freed his heroine from all doubt upon the subject, Sophocles maintained the sublime simplicity which distinguishes Antigone above all women of romance. The retribution that falls on Creon furnishes a powerful example of the Greek doctrine of Nemesis; but over Antigone herself Nemesis exerts no sway. In her action there was nothing unconsidered; in her doom there was nothing unforeseen.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FRAGMENTS OF ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, EURIPIDES.

Alexandrian and Byzantine Anthologies.—Titles of the Lost Plays of Æschylus.—The *Lycurgeia*.—The Trilogy on the Story of Achilles.—The Geography of the *Prometheus Unbound*.—Gnomic Character of the Sophoclean Fragments.—Providence, Wealth, Love, Marriage, Mourning.—What is true of the Sophoclean is still more true of the Euripidean Fragments.—Mutilated Plays.—*Phaëthon*, *Erechtheus*, *Antiope*, *Danaë*.—Goethe's Restitution of the *Phaëthon*.—Passage on Greek Athletes in the *Autolycus*.—Love, Women, Marriage, Domestic Affection, Children.—Death.—Stoical Endurance.—Justice and the Punishment of Sin.—Wealth.—Noble Birth.—Heroism.—Miscellaneous Gnomic Fragments.—The Popularity of Euripides.

It is difficult to treat the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides otherwise than as a golden treasury of saws and maxims, compiled by Alexandrian and Byzantine Greeks, for whom poetic beauty was of less value than sententious wisdom. The tragic scope and the æsthetic handling of the fables of their lost plays can scarcely be conjectured from such slight hints as we possess. Yet some light may be cast upon the Æschylean method by observing the titles of his dramas. We have, for example, the names of a complete tetralogy upon the legend of Lycurgus. The *Edonians*, the *Bassarids*, and the *Young Men*, constituted a connected series of plays, a *Lycurgeia*, with *Lycurgus* for the satyric supplement. Remembering that Æschylus called his own tragedies morsels picked up from

the great Homeric banquet-table, we may conclude that this tetralogy set forth the Dionysian fable told by Diomede to Glaucus in the *Iliad* (vi. 131).*

> No, for not Dryas' son, Lycurgus strong,
> Who the divine ones fought, on earth lived long.
> He the nurse-nymphs of Dionysus scared
> Down the Nyseïan steep, and the wild throng
> Their ritual things cast off, and maddening fared,
> Torn with his goad, like kine; so vast a crime he dared.
> Yea, Dionysus, such a sight was there,
> Himself in fear sank down beneath the seas.
> And Thetis in her breast him quailing bare,
> At the man's cry such trembling shook his knees.
> Then angered were the gods who live at ease,
> And Zeus smote blind Lycurgus, and he fell
> Loathed ere his day.

It appears that the titles of the three dramas composing the trilogy were taken from the Chorus. In the first play the Edonian Thracians, subjects of Lycurgus, formed the Chorus; in the second, the Bassarids, or nurse-nymphs of Dionysus; in the third, the youths whom the wine-god had persuaded to adopt his worship. The subject of the first play was, therefore, the advent of Dionysus and his following in Thrace, and the victory of Lycurgus over the new cult. The second set forth the captivity of the Bacchantes or Bassarids, together with the madness sent upon Lycurgus as a punishment for his resistance, whereby he was driven, according to post-Homeric versions of his legend, to the murder of his own son Dryas in a fit of fury. The third play carried on the subject by exhibiting the submission of Lycurgus to the god whom he had disowned and dishonoured, and his death, at the hands of his own subjects, upon Mount Pangæus. Thus the first Chorus was hostile to Dionysus; the second was sympathetic, though captive and impotent; the third was triumphant in his cause. The artistic sequence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis which the trilogy required,

* Worsley's translation, *Iliad*, vol. i. p. 154.

was developed through three moments in the life-drama of Lycurgus, and was typified in the changes of the choric sympathy, according to the law whereby Æschylus varied the form of his triple dramas and at the same time immediately connected the Chorus with the passion of each piece. The tragic interest centred in the conflict of Lycurgus and the god, and the final solution was afforded by the submission, though too late, of the protagonist's will to destiny. It is probable that the satyric play of *Lycurgus* represented the divine honours paid, after his death, to the old enemy, now become the satellite and subject of Dionysus, by pastoral folk and dwellers in the woodlands. The unification of obstinate antagonistic wills in the higher will of Zeus or Fate seems in all cases to have supplied Æschylus with the *Versöhnung* tragedy required, and to have suggested the religious κάθαρσις without which the Greek drama would have failed to point its lesson. Seen in this light, the *Lycurgeia* must have been a masterpiece only less sublime, and even more full, perhaps, of picturesque incidents, than the Promethean trilogy. The emotional complexion, if that phrase may be permitted, of each member of the trilogy was determined by the Chorus; wherein we trace a signal instance of the Æschylean method.

More even to be regretted than the *Lycurgeia* is a colossal lost trilogy to which the name of *Tragic Iliad* has been given. That Æschylus should have frequently handled the subject-matter of the *Iliad* was natural; and many titles of tragedies, quoted singly, point to his preoccupation with the mythus of Achilles. It has therefore been conjectured, with fair show of reason, that the *Myrmidons*, the *Nereids*, and the *Phrygians* formed a triple drama. The first described the withdrawal of Achilles from the war, the arming of Patroclus, and the grief which the son of Peleus felt for his friend's death. No Greek tragedy, had it been preserved, would have been more precious than this. The second showed how Thetis comforted

her child, and procured fresh armour for him from Hephæstus, and how Achilles slew Hector. In the third, Priam recovered the dead body of his son and buried it. Supposing the trilogy to have been constructed upon these outlines, it must have resembled a gigantic history-play, in which, as in the *Iliad* itself, the character of Achilles was sufficient to form the groundwork of a complicated poem. The theme, in other words, would have resembled those of the modern and romantic drama, rather than such as the elder Greek poets were in the habit of choosing. The *Achilleis* did not in any direct way illustrate the doctrine of Nemesis, or afford a tragic conflict between the human will and fate. It owed its lustre to the radiant beauty of the hero, to the pathos of his love for Patroclus, to the sudden blazing forth of irresistible energy when sorrow for the dead had driven him to revenge, and to the tranquillity succeeding tempest that dignified his generous compliance with the prayers of Priam. The trilogy composed upon it must therefore, like a Shakspearean play, have been a drama of character. The fragments of the *Myrmidones* have already been pieced together in the essay on the Homeric Achilles.* From the *Nereides* nothing has survived except what may be gathered from the meagre remnants of the Latin version made of it by Attius. The *Phrygians*, also called Ἕκτορος λύτρα, contained a speech of pleading addressed by Priam to the hero in his tent, of which the following is a relic: †

> καὶ τοὺς θανόντας εἰ θέλεις εὐεργετεῖν,
> τὸ γοῦν κακουργεῖν ἀμφιδεξίως ἔχει

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* See above, pp. 63-66.

† "Lo, if thou fain wouldst benefit the dead,
Or if thou seek to harm them, 'tis all one;
For they can feel no joy nor suffer pain,
Nathless high Nemesis is throned above us,
And Justice doth exact the dead man's due."

καὶ μήτε χαίρειν μήτε λυπεῖσθαι πάρα.
ἡμῶν γε μέντοι Νέμεσίς ἐσθ' ὑπερτέρα
καὶ τοῦ θανόντος ἡ δίκη πράσσει κότον.

The trilogy of which the *Prometheus Bound* formed probably the middle play has been sufficiently discussed in the chapter on Æschylus.* It remains in this place only to notice that the gigantic geography of the poet received further illustration in the lost play of the *Prometheus Bound*. "Cette géographie vertigineuse," says Victor Hugo, "est mêlée à une tragédie extraordinaire où l'on entend des dialogues plus qu'humains;" and, inverting this observation, we may add that the superhuman tragedy of the *Prometheis* owed much of its grandeur to the soul-dilating prospect of the earth's map, outstretched before the far-seeing sufferer on the crags of Caucasus.

Two other trilogies—a *Danais*, composed of the *Egyptians*, the *Suppliants*, and the *Danaides;* and an *Œdipodeia*, composed of *Laius*, the *Sphinx*, and *Œdipus*—may be mentioned, though to recover their outlines with any certainty is now hopeless. For the rest, it must be enough to transcribe and to translate a few fragments of singular beauty. Here is an invocation uttered in his hour of anguish by Philoctetes to Death, the deliverer:†

ὦ θάνατε παιὰν μή μ' ἀτιμάσῃς μολεῖν·
μόνος γὰρ εἶ σὺ τῶν ἀνηκέστων κακῶν
ἰατρός· ἄλγος δ' οὐδὲν ἅπτεται νεκροῦ.

Another passage on Death, remarkable for the stately grandeur of its style, may be quoted from the *Niobe:*‡

μόνος θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἑᾷ,
οὔτ' ἄν τι θύων οὔτ' ἐπισπένδων ἄνοις,

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* See above, pp. 173–188.

† "O Death, the saviour, spurn me not, but come!
For thou alone of ills incurable
Art healer: no pain preyeth on the dead."

‡ "Alone of gods Death loves not gifts; with him
Nor sacrifice nor incense aught avails;

οὐ βωμός ἐστιν οὐδὲ παιωνίζεται.
μόνου δὲ πειθὼ δαιμόνων ἀποστατεῖ.

The sublime speech of Aphrodite in the *Danaides*, imitated more than once by subsequent poets, must not be omitted: *

ἐρᾷ μὲν ἀγνὸς οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,
ἔρως δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν·
ὄμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν
ἔκυσε γαῖαν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς
μήλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον·
δενδρῶτις ὥρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
τέλειός ἐστι· τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος.

Nor, lastly, the mystic couplet ascribed to both Æschylus and his son Euphorion: †

Ζεύς ἐστιν αἰθὴρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανὸς,
Ζεύς τοι τὰ πάντα, χὤ τι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον.

The fragments of Sophocles are, perhaps, in even a stricter sense than those of Æschylus, a bare anthology, and the best way of dealing with them is to select those which illustrate the beauty of his style or the ripeness of his wisdom. Few indeed are full enough to afford materials for reconstructing the plot of a lost play. What, for instance, can be more tantalising to the student of Greek manners and sentiments than to know that Sophocles wrote a drama with the title *Lovers of Achilles*,

He hath no altar and no hymns of gladness;
Prayer stands aloof from him, Persuasion fails."

* "Love throbs in holy heaven to wound the earth;
And love still prompts the land to yearn for bridals;
The rain that falls in rivers from the sky,
Impregnates earth, and she brings forth for men
The flocks and herds and life of teeming Ceres;
The bloom of forests by dews hymeneal
Is perfected: in all which things I rule."

† "Zeus is the air, Zeus earth, and Zeus wide heaven:
Yea, Zeus is all things, and the power above them."

and yet to have no means of judging of its fable better than is given in this pretty simile? *—

νόσημ' ἔρωτος τοῦτ' ἐφίμερον κακόν·
ἔχοιμ' ἂν αὐτὸ μὴ κακῶς ἀπεικάσαι,
ὅταν πάγου φανέντος αἰθρίου χεροῖν
κρύσταλλον ἁρπάσωσι παῖδες ἀσταγῆ.
τὰ πρῶτ' ἔχουσιν ἡδονὰς ποταινίους,
τέλος δ' ὁ χυμὸς οὔθ' ὅπως ἀφῇ θέλει
οὔτ' ἐν χεροῖν τὸ κτῆμα σύμφορον μένειν.
οὕτω γε τοὺς ἐρῶντας αὐτὸς ἵμερος
δρᾶν καὶ τὸ μὴ δρᾶν πολλάκις προΐεται.

A whole series of plays were written by Sophocles on the tale of Helen, and all of them have passed, "like shapes of clouds we form, to nothing." There was, again, a drama of the *Epigoni*, which might perhaps have carried the tale of Thebes still further than the climax reached in the *Antigone*. Yet Stobæus has only thought fit to treat us to two excerpts from it, whereof the following, spoken by Alcmæon to Eriphyle, is the fullest: †

ὦ πᾶν σὺ τολμήσασα καὶ πέρα γύναι·
κάκιον ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ' ἔσται ποτὲ
γυναικὸς εἴ τι πῆμα γίγνεται βροτοῖς.

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* "This love-disease is a delightful trouble;
Well might I shadow forth its power as thus:
When the clear eager frost has fallen, boys
Seize with their fingers the firm frozen ice,
And first they feel an unaccustomed pleasure,
But in the end it melts, and they to leave it
Or in their hands to hold it know not how;
Even so the same desire drives wilful lovers
To do and not to do by frequent changes."

† "Woman, that hast dared all, and more than all!
There is not anything, nor will be ever,
Than woman worse, let what will fall on men."

It is right to observe that Welcker and Ahrens have conjecturally pieced together this and many other scattered fragments, and connected them in such a way as to reconstitute a tragedy with Argos for its scene, not Thebes.

The sententious philosophy of life that endeared Euripides to the compilers of commonplace books was expressed by Sophocles also, with sufficient independence of the context to make his speeches valuable as quarries for quotation. To this accident of his art is probably due the large number of fragments we possess upon general topics of morality and conduct. In the following fine passage the poet discusses the apparent injustice in the apportionment of good and evil fortune to virtuous and vicious men : *

δεινόν γε τοὺς μὲν δυσσεβεῖς κακῶν τ' ἄπο
βλάστοντας, εἶτα τούσδε μὲν πράσσειν καλῶς,
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἐσθλοὺς ἔκ τε γενναίων ἅμα
γεγῶτας εἶτα δυστυχεῖς πεφυκέναι.
οὐ χρῆν τάδ' οὕτω δαίμονας θνητῶν πέρι
πράσσειν· ἐχρῆν γὰρ τοὺς μὲν εὐσεβεῖς βροτῶν
ἔχειν τι κέρδος ἐμφανὲς θεῶν πάρα,
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἀδίκους τοῖσδε τὴν ἐναντίαν
δίκην κακῶν τιμωρὸν ἐμφανῆ τίνειν.
κοὐδεὶς ἂν οὕτως εὐτύχει κακὸς γεγώς.

The same play furnished Stobæus with an excellent observation on garrulity : †

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις ἥδεται λέγων ἀεὶ
λέληθεν αὑτὸν τοῖς ξυνοῦσιν ὢν βαρύς.

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* "'Tis terrible that impious men, the sons
Of sinners, even such should thrive and prosper,
While men by virtue moulded, sprung from sires,
Complete in goodness, should be born to suffer.
Nay, but the gods do ill in dealing thus
With mortals ! It were well that pious men
Should take some signal guerdon at their hands ;
But evil-doers, on their heads should fall
Conspicuous punishment for deeds ill-done.
Then should no wicked man fare well and flourish."
From the *Alcestes.*

† "The man who takes delight in always talking
Is irksome to his friends and does not know it."

Also with a good remark upon the value of sound common sense : *

ψυχὴ γὰρ εὔνους καὶ φρονοῦσα τοὔνδικον
κρείσσων σοφιστοῦ παντός ἐστιν εὑρέτις.

The *Alcadæ* supplied this pungent diatribe upon the contrast between poverty and wealth : †

τὰ χρήματ' ἀνθρώποισιν εὐρίσκει φίλους,
αὔθις δὲ τιμὰς εἶτα τῆς ὑπερτάτης
τυραννίδος θακοῦσιν αἰσχίστην ἔδραν.
ἔπειτα δ' οὐδεὶς ἐχθρὸς οὔτε φύεται
πρὸς χρήμαθ' οἵ τε φύντες ἀρνοῦνται στυγεῖν.
δεινὸς γὰρ ἕρπειν πλοῦτος ἔς τε τἄβατα
καὶ πρὸς βέβηλα, χὠπόθεν πένης ἀνὴρ
μήδ' ἐντυχὼν δύναιτ' ἂν ὧν ἐρᾷ τυχεῖν.
καὶ γὰρ δυσειδὲς σῶμα καὶ δυσώνυμον,
γλώσσῃ σοφὸν τίθησιν εὔμορφόν τ' ἰδεῖν.
μόνῳ δὲ χαίρειν καὶ νοσεῖν ἐξουσία
πάρεστιν αὐτῷ κἀπικρύψασθαι κακά.

In the *Locrian Ajax* we find two single lines worth preservation : ‡

σοφοὶ τύραννοι τῶν σοφῶν ξυνουσίᾳ·

and : §

ἄνθρωπός ἐστι πνεῦμα καὶ σκιὰ μόνον.

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* "A reasonable soul, by just perception,
Better than sophists may discover truth."

† "Money makes friends for men, and heaps up honours,
And sets them on the tyrant's hated throne :
Wealth finds no foes, or none but covert foes,
Climbs pathless ways, and treads where tracks are beaten,
While poor men, what luck gives them may not use :
A mis-shaped body, an ill-sounding name,
Wealth turns by words to beauty, gifts with wisdom ;
For wealth alone hath privilege of freedom
In joy and sickness, and can hide its sorrow."

‡ "Tyrants are wise by wise society."

§ "Man is but wind and shadow, nought besides."

This charming description comes from the *Ægeus*, recalling Athens, where the poplars grow so large and leafy: *

> ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν φύλλοισιν αἰγείρου μακρᾶς,
> κἂν ἄλλο μηδὲν, ἀλλὰ τοὐκείνης κάρα
> αὔρα κραδαίνει κἀνακουφίζει πτέρον.

Some scattered utterances upon women and love may be collected from the *Phædra*, in which play Sophocles broke the ground trodden by Euripides: †

> ἔρως γὰρ ἄνδρας οὐ μόνους ἐπέρχεται
> οὐδ' αὖ γυναῖκας ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν ἄνω
> ψυχὰς χαράσσει κἀπὶ πόντον ἔρχεται.
> καὶ τόνδ' ἀπείργειν οὐδ' ὁ παγκρατὴς σθένει
> Ζεὺς ἀλλ' ὑπείκει καὶ θέλων ἐγκλίνεται.
>
> οὕτω γυναικὸς οὐδὲν ἂν μεῖζον κακὸν
> κακῆς ἀνὴρ κτήσαιτ' ἂν οὐδὲ σώφρονος
> κρεῖσσον· παθὼν δ' ἕκαστος ὧν τύχῃ λέγει.

The next fragment, extracted possibly from the *Colchian Women*, deserves to be compared with similar Euripidean passages, though in point of workmanship it is finer, and in profound suggestion more intense, than is the usual manner of Euripides: ‡

> ὦ παῖδες ἥ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον
> ἀλλ' ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.

---

* "As in the boughs of a tall poplar-tree,
If nothing else, at least her shivering top
Moves 'neath the breeze, and waves her leafy pinions."

† "Love falls not only on the hearts of men
Or women, but the souls of gods above
He furrows, and makes onslaught on the sea:
Against his force Zeus the all-powerful
Is impotent—he yields and bends with pleasure."

"Than a bad wife a man can have no greater
Curse, and no greater blessing than a good one.
Each after trial speaks by his experience."

‡ "Girls, look you, Kupris is not Kupris only:
In her one name names manifold are blended;

ἔστιν μὲν Ἄιδης ἔστι δ' ἀφθιτος βία
ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μαινὰς ἐστὶ δ' ἵμερος
ἄκρατος ἔστ' οἰμωγμός. ἐν κείνῃ τὸ πᾶν
σπουδαῖον ἡσυχαῖον ἐς βίαν ἄγον.
ἐντήκεται γὰρ πνευμόνων ὅσοις ἔνι
ψυχή. τὶς οὐχὶ τῆσδε τῆς θεοῦ βορά;
εἰσέρχεται μὲν ἰχθύων πλωτῷ γένει
ἔνεστι δ' ἐν χέρσου τετρασκελεῖ γονῇ·
νωμᾷ δ' ἐν οἰωνοῖσι τοὐκείνης πτερὸν
ἐν θηρσὶν ἐν βροτοῖσιν ἐν θεοῖς ἄνω.
τίν' οὐ παλαίουσ' ἐς τρὶς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν;
εἴ μοι θέμις, θέμις δὲ τἀληθῆ λέγειν,
Διὸς τυραννεῖ πνευμόνων· ἄνευ δορὸς
ἄνευ σιδήρου πάντα τοι συντέμνεται
Κύπρις τὰ θνητῶν καὶ θεῶν βουλεύματα.

While upon this topic of love and women, I may quote a considerable fragment of the *Tereus*, marked by more sympathy for women in the troubles of their married lives than the Greek poets commonly express: *

νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι χωρὶς, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις
ἔβλεψα ταύτῃ τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν,
ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν· αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς

For she is Death, imperishable power,
Frenetic fury, irresistible longing,
Wailing and groaning. Her one force includes
All energy, all languor, and all violence.
Into the vitals of whatever thing
Hath breath of life, she sinks. Who feeds her not?
She creeps into the fishes of the sea
And the four-footed creatures of dry land,
Shakes 'mid the birds her own aërial plumes,
Sways beasts and mortal men and gods above.
Which of the gods hath she not thrown in wrestling?
If right allow, and to speak truth is right,
She rules the heart of Zeus. Without or spear
Or sword, I therefore bid you know, Dame Kupris
Fells at a blow of go ls and men the counsels."

* "Now am I nought—abandoned: oftentimes
I've noticed how to this we women fall,
How we are nought. In girlhood and at home

ἥδιστον οἶμαι ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·
τερπνῶς γὰρ ἀεὶ πάντας ἀνοία τρέφει.
ὅταν δ' ἐς ἥβην ἐξικώμεθ' εὔφρονες,
ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεῶν πατρῴων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἄπο,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
αἱ δ' εἰς ἀήθη δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπίρροθα,
καὶ ταῦτ' ἐπειδὰν εὐφρόνη ζεύξῃ μία
χρεὼν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

The same play contains a fine choric passage upon the equality of human souls at birth, their after inequality through fortune: *

ἓν φῦλον ἀνθρώπων μί' ἔδειξε πατρὸς καὶ ματρὸς ἡμᾶς
ἀμέρα τοὺς πάντας· οὐδεὶς ἔξοχος ἄλλος ἔβλαστεν ἄλλου.
βόσκει δὲ τοὺς μὲν μοῖρα δυσαμερίας τοὺς δ' ὕλβος ἡμῶν
τοὺς δὲ δουλείας ζυγὸν ἔσχεν ἀνάγκας.

Among the fragments that deal with the commonplaces of Greek tragedy, the following, from the *Tyndareus*, may be cited as a brilliant expression of the Solonian proverb: †

οὐ χρή ποτ' εὖ πράσσοντος ὀλβίσαι τύχας
ἀνδρὸς πρὶν αὐτῷ παντελῶς ἤδη βίος
διεκπερανθῇ καὶ τελευτήσῃ βίον.

Our life's the sweetest life men ever know,
For careless joy is a glad nurse to all:
But when we come to youth, gleeful and gay,
Forth are we thrust, and bought and sold and bartered,
Far from our household gods, from parents far,
Some to strange husbands, to barbarians some,
To homes uncouth, to houses foul with shame.
Yea, let but one night yoke us, all these things
Must needs forthwith be praised and held for fair."

* "Of one race and common lineage all men at the hour of birth
From the womb are issued equal, sons alike of mother earth;
But our lots how diverse! Some are nursed by fortune harsh and rude,
Some by gentle ease, while others bare their necks to servitude."

† "To call that man who prospers truly happy
Were vain before his life be wholly done;

ἐν γὰρ βραχεῖ καθεῖλε κώλίγῳ χρόνῳ
πάμπλουτον ὄλβον δαίμονος κακοῦ δόσις,
ὅταν μεταστῇ καὶ θεοῖς δοκῇ τάδε.

A play called the *Scyrian Women* furnishes two excellent apophthegmatic passages upon the misery of old age and the inutility of mourning : *

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλγος οἷον ἡ πολλὴ ζόη.
πάντ' ἐμπέφυκε τῷ μακρῷ γήρᾳ κακά,
νοῦς φροῦδος ἔργ' ἀχρεῖα φροντίδες κεναί.

ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἦν κλαίουσιν ἰᾶσθαι κακὰ
καὶ τὸν θανόντα δακρύοις ἀνιστάναι,
ὁ χρυσὸς ἧσσον κτῆμα τοῦ κλαίειν ἂν ἦν.
νῦν δ' ὦ γεραιὲ ταῦτ' ἀνηνύτως ἔχει
τὸν μὲν τάφῳ κρυφθέντα πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἄγειν·
κἀμοὶ γὰρ ἂν πατήρ γε δακρύων χάριν
ἀνῆκτ' ἂν εἰς φῶς.

Two lines from a lost play on the tale of Odysseus illustrate the celebrated pun of Ajax on his own name : †

ὀρθῶς δ' Ὀδυσσεύς εἰμ' ἐπώνυμος κακοῖς·
πολλοὶ γὰρ ὠδύσαντο δυσσεβεῖς ἐμοί.

For in short time and swift great power and riches
Have fallen by the dower of fate malign,
When fortune veers and thus the gods decree."

* "There is no trouble worse than length of life.
Old age hath all the ills that flesh is heir to—
Vain thoughts and powerless deeds and vanished mind."

"If mourners by their cries could cure our misery,
If tears could raise the dead to life again,
Gold would be valueless compared with crying.
But now, old man, these sorrows nought avail
To bring to light him whom the grave hath covered ;
Else had my father, too, by grace of tears,
The day revisited."

The second of these extracts finds a close echo in some beautiful lines on the inutility of tears by Philemon [*Sardius*, fr. i.].

† "Rightly do bad men call my name Odysseus,
For ill folk odious insults heap upon me."

In conclusion, a few single lines or couplets may be strung together for their proverbial pithiness and verbal delicacy: *

ἔνεστι γὰρ τις καὶ λόγοισιν ἡδονὴ
λήθην ὅταν ποιῶσι τῶν ὄντων κακῶν.

τὸ μὴ γὰρ εἶναι κρεῖσσον ἢ τὸ ζῆν κακῶς.

πόνου μεταλλαχθέντος οἱ πόνοι γλυκεῖς.

εἰ σῶμα δοῦλον ἀλλ' ὁ νοῦς ἐλεύθερος.

ὅρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω.

ὦ θνητὸν ἀνδρῶν καὶ ταλαίπωρον γένος·
ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν, πλὴν σκιαῖς ἐοικότες,
βάρος περισσὸν γῆς ἀνασπρωφώμενοι.

θάρσει, γύναι· τὰ πολλὰ τῶν δεινῶν ὄναρ
πνεύσαντα νυκτὸς ἡμέρας μαλάσσεται.

τὰ μὲν διδακτὰ μανθάνω, τὰ δ' εὑρετὰ
ζητῶ, τὰ δ' εὐκτὰ παρὰ θεῶν ἠτησάμην.

Whenever we compare Euripides with his predecessors, we are led to remark that he disintegrated the drama by destroying its artistic unity and revealing the *modus operandi* of the scientific analyst. All the elements of a great poem were given as it were in their totality by Æschylus. Sophocles, while conscious of the effect to be gained by resolving the drama into its component parts, was careful to recombine them by

* "Even in words there is a pleasure, when
They bring forgetfulness of present woes."

"'Tis better not to be than to live badly."

"When toil has been well finished, toils are sweet."

"Enslave the body—still the soul is free."

"The oaths of women I on water write."

"O mortals, wretched creatures of a day,
How truly are we nought but like to shadows
Rolling superfluous weight of earth around!"

"Take courage, lady: many fearful things
That breathed dark dreams in night, by day are solaced."

"What may be taught, I learn; what may be found,
I seek; from Heaven I ask what may be prayed for."

his art. It is difficult with either Æschylus or Sophocles to separate a passage from its context without injuring the whole, or to understand the drift of a sentence without considering both circumstance and person. With Euripides the case is somewhat different. Though he composed dramas supremely good in the aggregate impression left upon our mind, we feel that he employed his genius with delight in perfecting each separate part regarded by itself alone. So much of time and talent might be spent on the elaboration of the plot, so much on the accentuation of the characters, so much on lyric poetry, so much on moral maxims, so much on description, and so much on artificial argument. There is something over-strained in this crude statement; yet it serves to indicate the analytic method noticeable in Euripides. It consequently happened that his plays lent themselves admirably to the scissors and pastebox method of the compilers. He was a master of gnomes and sentences, and his tragedies were ready-made repertories of quotations. The good cause and the better were pleaded in his dialogues with impartial skill, because it was the poet's aim to set forth what might be said rhetorically, because he took a lively interest in casuistry for its own sake. These qualities, combined with so much that is attractive in his fables, radiant in his fancy, tender in his human sympathy, and romantic in his conduct of a play, endeared him to the Greeks of all succeeding ages. What they wanted in dramatic poetry he supplied better than any other playwright, except perhaps Menander, who, for similar reasons, shared a similar exceptionally lucky fate. The result is that, besides possessing at least eighteen of the plays of Euripides, as against seven of Sophocles and seven of Æschylus, our anthology of Euripidean excerpts is voluminous in the same ratio. The majority of these we owe to the industry of Stobæus, who always found something to his purpose in a drama of Euripides, while collecting wise precepts and descriptive

passages to illustrate the nature of a vice or virtue. We must be careful, amid the medley of sentiments expressed with equal force and equal ease, to remember that they are not the poet's own, but put into the mouth of his dramatic personages. What is peculiar is the impartiality of rhetorical treatment they display—a quality which, though it may not justify, accounts for the Aristophanic hostility to the Euripidean school of talkers on all subjects.

In addition to fragments, there remain detached portions of the *Phaëthon*, the *Erechtheus*, and the *Antiope*, sufficient, if nothing else had been preserved of the Euripidean drama, to suggest a better notion of this poet and his style than of Ion or Achæus, his lost compeers in the Alexandrian Canon. From the catastrophe of the *Phaëthon*, for example, it appears that Euripides contrived a truly striking contrast between the reception of the dead youth's corpse into the palace by his mother, and the advent, immediately following, of his father with a Chorus chanting bridal hymns. Lycurgus the orator, quoting the *Erechtheus*, has transmitted a characteristic speech by Praxithea, who deserves to be added to the list of courageous women painted with the virtues of εὐψυχία by Euripides. She maintains that, just as she would gladly send forth sons in the face of death to fight for their country, so, when the State requires of her the sacrifice of a daughter, she would be ashamed to refuse this much and far more. The outlines of the *Antiope* are more blurred; yet enough survives of a dialectical contention between Zethus and Amphion, the one arguing for a life of study and culture, the other for a life of arms and action, to illustrate this phase of the master's manner. With regard to the *Phaëthon*, it should be mentioned that Goethe attempted its restitution. His essay may be studied with interest by those who seek to understand the German poet's method of approaching the antique. The reverence with which he handles the precious relics may possibly astonish scholars,

who, through fastidiousness of taste, have depreciated a dramatist they imperfectly comprehend.* English literature, since the beginning of this year, can boast its own *Erechtheus*, restored by Swinburne on the model of Æschylus rather than Euripides. While referring to the mutilated dramas of Euripides, the opening to the *Danaë* requires a passing word of comment. It consists of a prologue in the mouth of Hermes, a Chorus, and a couple of lines spoken by Acrisius. The whole, however, is pretty clearly the work of some mediæval forger, and has, so far as it goes, the same kind of interest as the Χριστὸς πάσχων, because it illustrates the ascendancy of Euripides during the later ages of Greek culture.

Irksome as it may be to both writer and reader, I know no better method of dealing with the fragments of Euripides than that already adopted with regard to those of Sophocles. The fragments themselves are precious, and deserve to be presented to the modern student with loving and reverential care. Yet there is no way of centralising the interest of their miscellaneous topics; and to treat them as an anthology of quotations, selecting the most characteristic and translating these as far as possible into equivalent lines, is all that I can do.

A peculiarly interesting fragment in its bearing on Greek life shall be chosen for the first quotation. It comes from the satyric drama of *Autolycus*, and expresses the contempt felt by cultivated Athenians for young men who devoted all their energies to gymnastics. It is not easy to connect the idea of vulgarity with that of the Greek athletes whose portraits in marble, no less resplendent than the immortal Apoxyomenos of the Vatican, adorned the peristyles of Altis. Yet there can be little doubt from the following fragment, taken in connection with certain hints in Plato, that these muscular heroes of an hour, for whom wreaths were woven and breaches broken in the city walls, struck some green-eyed

* See Goethe, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 1840, vol. xxxiii. pp. 22–43.

philosophers as the incarnation of rowdyism. Euripides, if we may trust his biographers, had been educated by his father as an athlete; and it is not improbable that his early distaste for an eminently uncongenial occupation, no less than his familiarity with the manners of its professors, embittered his style in this sarcastic passage. Such splendid beings as the Autolycus, before whom the distinguished guests in Xenophon's Symposium were silenced, seemed to our poet at best but sculptor's models, walking statues, *πόλεως ἀγάλματα*, and at worst mere slaves of jaws and belly, *περισσαὶ σαρκές*. Early in Greek literature the same relentless light of moral science, like the gaze of Apollonius undoing Lamia's charm, had been cast upon the athletes by Xenophanes of Colophon. While listening to Euripides, we can fancy that the Adikos Logos from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes is speaking through his lips to an Athenian audience, composed of would-be orators and assiduous dikasts: *

κακῶν γὰρ ὄντων μυρίων καθ' Ἑλλάδα,
οὐδὲν κάκιόν ἐστιν ἀθλητῶν γένους.
οἱ πρῶτα μὲν ζῆν οὔτε μανθάνουσιν εὖ,
οὔτ' ἂν δύναιντο· πῶς γὰρ ὅστις ἐστ' ἀνὴρ
γνάθου τε δοῦλος νηδύος θ' ἡσσημένος,
κτήσαιτ' ἂν ὄλβον εἰς ὑπερβολὴν πατρός;
οὐδ' αὖ πένεσθαι καὶ ξυνηρετμεῖν τύχαις
οἷοί τ'· ἔθη γὰρ οὐκ ἐθισθέντες καλὰ
σκληρῶς διαλλάσσουσιν εἰς τἀμήχανα.
λαμπροὶ δ' ἐν ἥβῃ καὶ πόλεως ἀγάλματα
φοιτῶσ'· ὅταν δὲ προσπέσῃ γῆρας πικρὸν
τρίβωνες ἐκβαλόντες οἰχονται κρόκας.

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* "Of all the thousand ills that prey on Hellas
Not one is greater than the tribe of athletes;
For, first, they never learn how to live well,
Nor indeed could they; seeing that a man,
Slave to his jaws and belly, cannot hope
To heap up wealth superior to his sire's.
How to be poor and row in fortune's boat
They know no better; for they have not learned
Manners that make men proof against ill luck.
Lustrous in youth, they lounge like living statues
Decking the streets; but when sad old age comes,

ἐμεμψάμην δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον
οἳ τῶνδ' ἕκατι σύλλογον ποιούμενοι
τίμῶσ' ἀχρείους ἡδονὰς δαιτὸς χάριν.
τὶς γὰρ παλαίσας εὖ, τίς ὠκύπους ἀνὴρ
ἢ δίσκον ἄρας ἢ γνάθον παίσας καλῶς
πόλει πατρῴᾳ στέφανον ἥρκεσεν λαβῶν ;
πότερα μαχοῦνται πολεμίοισιν ἐν χεροῖν
δίσκους ἔχοντες ἢ δι' ἀσπίδων χερὶ
θείνοντες ἐκβαλοῦσι πολεμίους πάτρας ;
οὐδεὶς σιδήρου ταῦτα μωραίνει πέλας
στάς. ἄνδρας οὖν ἐχρῆν σοφούς τε κἀγαθοὺς
φίλλοις στέφεσθαι, χὥστις ἡγεῖται πόλει
κάλλιστα, σώφρων καὶ δίκαιος ὢν ἀνήρ,
ὅστις τε μύθοις ἔργ' ἀπαλλάσσει κακὰ
μάχας τ' ἀφαιρῶν καὶ στάσεις· τοιαῦτα γὰρ
πόλει τε πάσῃ πᾶσί θ' Ἕλλησιν καλά.

Passing from the athletes to a cognate subject, the following fragment from the *Dictys* nobly expresses the ideal of friendship. The first two lines seem to need correction; I have let them stand, though inclined to propose κεἰ for καὶ, and to conjecture the loss of a line after the second:*

φίλος γὰρ ἦν μοι· καί μ' ἔρως ἕλοι ποτὲ
οὐκ εἰς τὸ μῶρον οὐδέ μ' εἰς Κύπριν τρέπων.

They fall and perish like a threadbare coat.
I've often blamed the customs of us Hellenes,
Who for the sake of such men meet together
To honour idle sport and feed our fill;
For who, I pray you, by his skill in wrestling,
Swiftness of foot, good boxing, strength at quoits,
Has served his city by the crown he gains?
Will they meet men in fight with quoits in hand,
Or in the press of shields drive forth the foeman
By force of fisticuffs from hearth and home?
Such follies are forgotten face to face
With steel. We therefore ought to crown with wreaths
Men wise and good, and him who guides the State,
A man well-tempered, just, and sound in counsel,
Or one who by his words averts ill-deeds,
Warding off strife and warfare; for such things
Bring honour on the city and all Hellenes."

* "He was my friend; and may love lead me never
Aside to folly or to sensual joy!

ἀλλ' ἔστι δή τις ἄλλος ἐν βροτοῖς ἔρως,
ψυχῆς δικαίας σώφρονός τε κἀγαθῆς.
καὶ χρῆν δὲ τοῖς βροτοῖσι τόνδ' εἶναι νόμον,
τῶν εὐσεβούντων οἴτινές γε σώφρονες
ἐρᾶν, Κύπριν δὲ τὴν Διὸς χαίρειν ἐᾶν.

About Erôs and Aphrodite the poet has supplied us with a good store of contradictory sentiments. In one long and very remarkable fragment (No. 839, ed. Dindorf) from an unknown play, Euripides, if he be indeed the author of the verses, has imitated Æschylus, taking almost word for word the famous vaunt of Kupris, quoted above from the *Danaides*. The three next pieces may be also cited among the praises of love: *

ἔρωτα δ' ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν
καὶ τῶν ἁπάντων δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατον,
ἢ σκαιός ἐστιν ἢ καλῶν ἄπειρος ὤν
οὐκ οἶδε τὸν μέγιστον ἀνθρώποις θεόν.

ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς ἔρωτα πίπτουσιν βροτῶν
ἐσθλῶν ὅταν τύχωσι τῶν ἐρωμένων
οὐκ ἔσθ' ὁποίας λείπεται τῆς ἡδονῆς.

Surely there is another sort of love
For a soul, just, well-tempered, strong, and good.
And there should be this law for mortal men,
To love the pure and temperate, and to leave
Kupris, the daughter of high Zeus, alone."

We find a witty contradiction to the sentiment of these lines in a fragment of Amphis [*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2]:

τί φῄς; σὺ ταυτὶ προσδοκᾷς πείσειν ἐμ' ὡς
ἔρως τις ἐστὶν ἔστις ὡραῖον φιλῶν
τρόπων ἐραστής ἐστι τὴν ὄψιν παρεὶς;
ἄφρων γ' ἀληθῶς.

* "Whoso pretends that Love is no great god,
The lord and master of all deities,
Is either dull of soul, or, dead to beauty,
Knows not the greatest god that governs men."

Augë, 269.

"When it befalls poor mortal men to love,
Should they find worthy objects for their loving,
Then is there nothing left of joy to long for."

Andromeda, 147.

ἔχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον,
ἐν τοῖς ἀμηχάνοισιν εὐπορώτατον,
ἔρωτα πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεῶν.

Here again, remembering how much the Greeks included in the term Music, is a pretty compliment :*

μουσικὴν δ' ἄρα
ἔρως διδάσκει κἂν ἄμουσος ᾖ τὸ πρίν.

The next is a graceful expostulation on the lover's part with the god who can make or mar his happiness in life : †

σὺ δ' ὦ τύραννε θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων ἔρως
ἢ μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ,
ἢ τοῖς ἐρῶσιν ὧν σὺ δημιουργὸς εἶ
μοχθοῦσι μόχθους εὐτυχῶς συνεκπόνει.
καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δρῶν τίμιος θεοῖς ἔσει,
μὴ δρῶν δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ διδάσκεσθαι φιλεῖν
ἀφαιρεθήσει χάριτας αἷς τιμῶσί σε.

Nor is this without its tincture of respect : ‡

ἀνδρὸς δ' ὁρῶντος εἰς κύπριν νεανίου
ἀφύλακτος ἡ τήρησις· ἦν γὰρ φαῦλος ᾖ

" Mine is a master of resolve and daring,
Filled with all craft to do impossible things,
Love, among gods the most unconquerable."
Hippolytus, 431.

* " Music, at least,
Love teaches men, unmusical before."
Sthenebœa, 664.

† " O Love, our lord, of gods and men the king,
Either teach not how beauteous beauty is,
Or help poor lovers, whom like clay thou mouldest,
Through toil and labour to a happy end.
Thus shalt thou gain high honour : otherwise
The loving lessons that men learn of thee,
Will rob thee of their worship and goodwill."
Andromeda, 135.

‡ " A young man with eyes turned to follow beauty
May not be governed : yea, though he be weak,

τἄλλ' εἰς ἔρωτα πᾶς ἀνὴρ σοφώτερος.
ἦν δ' αὖ προσῆται Κύπρις ἡδιστον λαβεῖν.

But Euripides can turn round and rate Love for his encouragement of idleness. There is a stern perception of the facts of life in the following excerpt from the *Danaë*:*

ἔρως γὰρ ἀργὸν κἀπὶ τοῖς ἀργοῖς ἔφυ·
φιλεῖ κάτοπτρα καὶ κομῆς ξανθίσματα
φεύγει δὲ μόχθους. ἔν δέ μοι τεκμήριον.
οὐδεὶς προσαιτῶν βίοτον ἠράσθη βροτῶν,
ἐν τοῖς δ' ἔχουσιν ἠβητὴς πέφυχ' ὅδε.

Concerning women he is no less impartial. However he may have chosen to paint their possibilities of heroism, and the force of their character in hours of passion or of need, no poet has certainly abused them in stronger terms. The following is an almost laughable example:†

δεινὴ μὲν ἀλκὴ κυμάτων θαλασσίων
δειναὶ δὲ ποταμοῦ καὶ πυρὸς θερμοῦ πνόαι
δεινὸν δὲ πενία δεινὰ δ' ἄλλα μύρια·
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω δεινὸν ὡς γυνὴ κακὸν
οὐδ' ἂν γένοιτο γράμμα τοιοῦτ' ἐν γραφῇ
οὐδ' ἂν λόγος δείξειεν· εἰ δέ του θεῶν
τόδ' ἐστι πλάσμα δημιουργὸς ὢν κακῶν
μέγιστος ἔστω καὶ βροτοῖσι δυσμενής.

Yet is he wise and masterful for loving;
And when Love smiles, what boon surpasseth love?"
Antigone, 161.

* "Love is a sluggard, and of sloth the twin:
Mirrors and hair-dyes are his favourite toys;
Labour he shuns. I take this truth to witness:
No beggar for his bread was known to love,
But with rich men his beauty-bloom abounds."

† "Dire is the violence of ocean waves,
And dire the blast of rivers and hot fire,
And dire is want, and dire are countless things;
But nothing is so dire and dread as woman.
No painting could express her dreadfulness,
No words describe it. If a god made woman,
And fashioned her, he was for men the artist
Of woes unnumbered, and their deadly foe."
Incert. Fab. 880.

Nor can the group which I have classed together in the following extracts be considered as complimentary : *

πλὴν τῆς τεκούσης θῆλυ πᾶν μισῶ γένος.

ἔνδον μένουσαν τὴν γυναῖκ' εἶναι χρεὼν
ἐσθλὴν θύρασι δ' ἀξίαν τοῦ μηδενός.

ἔστιν δὲ μήτηρ φιλότεκνος μᾶλλον πατρός·
ἡ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῆς οἶδεν ὄνθ' ὁ δ' οἴεται.

οὐκ ἔστιν οὔτε τεῖχος οὔτε χρήματα.
οὔτ' ἄλλο δυσφύλακτον οὐδὲν ὡς γυνή.

ἀντὶ γὰρ πυρὸς
πῦρ ἄλλο μεῖζον ἡδὲ δυσμαχώτερον
ἔβλαστον αἱ γυναῖκες.

γαμεῖτε νῦν γαμεῖτε κᾆτα θνήσκετε
ἢ φαρμάκοισιν ἐκ γυναικὸς ἢ δόλοις.

On marriage many pithy sayings might be cited. The one I take first is eminent for practical brutality combined with sound sense :

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* " Saving my mother, I hate womankind."

Melanippide, 507.

" Good women must abide within the house :
Those whom we meet abroad are nothing worth."

Meleager, 527.

" Mothers are fonder of their sons than fathers :
For mothers know they're theirs, while fathers think it."

Incert. Fab. 883.

" There is no fort, there is no money-box,
Nor aught besides, so hard to guard as woman."

Danaë, 323.

" Instead of fire,
Another fire mightier and more invincible
Is woman."

Hippolytus, 430.

" Marry, go to, yea, marry—and then die
By poison at a woman's hand or wiles."

Cretan Women, 467.

ὅσοι γαμοῦσι δ' ἢ γένει κρείσσους γάμους
ἢ πολλὰ χρήματ' οὐκ ἐπίστανται γαμεῖν.
τὰ τῆς γυναῖκος γὰρ κρατοῦντ' ἐν δώμασιν
δουλοῖ τὸν ἄνδρα κοὐκέτ' ἐστ' ἐλεύθερος.
πλοῦτος δ' ἐπακτὸς ἐκ γυναικείων γάμων
ἀνόνητος· αἱ γὰρ διαλύσεις οὐ ῥᾳδίαι.*

To the same category belongs the following, though its worldly wisdom conceals no bitterness: †

κακὸν γυναῖκα πρὸς νέαν ζεῦξαι νέον·
μακρὰ γὰρ ἰσχὺς μᾶλλον ἀρσένων μένει,
θήλεια δ' ἥβη θᾶσσον ἐκλείπει δέμας.

It answers to our own proverb: "A young man married is a young man marred."

For the sanctities of domestic life, and for the pathetic beauty of maternal love, no poet had a deeper sense than Euripides. The following lines, spoken apparently by Danaë, make us keenly regret the loss of the tragedy that bore her name; all the tenderness of the Simonidean elegy upon her fable seems to inspire the maiden's longing for a child to fill her arms and sport upon her knee: ‡

τάχ' ἂν πρὸς ἀγκάλαισι καὶ στέρνοις ἐμοῖς
πηδῶν ἀθύροι καὶ φιλημάτων ὄχλῳ
ψυχὴν ἐμὴν κτήσαιτο· ταῦτα γὰρ βροτοῖς
φίλτρον μέγιστον αἱ ξυνούσιαι πάτερ.

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* "Those men who mate with women better born
Or wed great riches, know not how to wed;
For when the woman's part doth rule the house,
The man's a slave; large dowers are worse than none,
Seeing they make divorce more difficult."—*Melanippide*, 513.

† "To mate a youth with a young wife is ill;
Seeing a man's strength lasteth, while the bloom
Of beauty quickly leaves a woman's form."—*Æolus*, 22.

‡ "He, leaping to my arms and in my bosom,
Might haply sport, and with a crowd of kisses
Might win my soul forth; for there is no greater
Love-charm than close companionship, my father."
Danaë, 325.

And where was the charm of children ever painted with more feeling than in these verses from the same play?*—

γύναι, φίλον μὲν φέγγος ἡλίου τόδε,
καλὸν δὲ πόντου χεῖμ' ἰδεῖν εὐήνεμον,
γῆ τ' ἠρινὸν θάλλουσα πλούσιόν θ' ὕδωρ,
πολλῶν τ' ἔπαινον ἐστί μοι λέξαι καλῶν.
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω λαμπρὸν οὐδ' ἰδεῖν καλὸν
ὡς τοῖς ἄπαισι καὶ πόθῳ δεδηγμένοις
παίδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἰδεῖν φάος.

In the next quotation, beautiful by reason of its plainness, a young man is reminded of the sweetness of a mother's love:†

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν μητρὸς ἥδιον τέκνοις.
ἐρᾶτε μητρὸς παῖδες· ὡς οὐκ ἔστ' ἔρως
τοιοῦτος ἄλλος οἷος ἡδίων ἐρᾶν.

The sentiment here expressed seems to be contradicted by a fragment from an unknown play (No. 887), where a son tells his mother that he cannot be expected to cling to her as much as to his father. The Greeks, as we gather from the *Oresteia* of Æschylus, believed that the male offspring was specially related by sympathy, duty, and hereditary qualities to his father. The contrast between women and men in respect to the paternal home is well conveyed in the following four lines:

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* "Lady, the sun's light to our eyes is dear,
And fair the tranquil reaches of the sea,
And flowery earth in May, and bounding waters;
And so right many fair things I might praise;
Yet nothing is so radiant and so fair
As for souls childless, with desire sore-smitten,
To see the light of babes about the house."

Dana, 327.

† "Nought is more dear to children than their mother.
Sons, love your mother; for there is no love
Sweeter than this that can be loved by men."

Erechtheus, 370.

γυνὴ γὰρ ἐξελθοῦσα πατρῴων δόμων
οὐ τῶν τεκόντων ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ τοῦ λέχους·
τὸ δ' ἄρσεν ἕστηκ' ἐν δόμοις ἀεὶ γένος
θεῶν πατρῴων καὶ τάφων τιμάορον.*

Some of the most remarkable excerpts from Euripides turn upon the thought of death—a doom accepted by him with magnanimous Greek stoicism. Those which appear to me the most important I have thrown together for convenience of comparison: †

τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ ζῆν τοῦθ' ὁ κέκληται θανεῖν,
τὸ ζῆν δὲ θνήσκειν ἐστί; πλὴν ὅμως βροτῶν
νοσοῦσιν οἱ βλέποντες οἱ δ' ὀλωλότες
οὐδὲν νοσοῦσιν οὐδὲ κέκτηνται κακά.

ἐχρῆν γὰρ ἡμᾶς σύλλογον ποιουμένους
τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν εἰς ὅσ' ἔρχεται κακά,
τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα καὶ πόνων πεπαυμένον
χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν· κατθανὼν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ
γῆ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει.

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* "A woman, when she leaves her father's home,
Belongs not to her parents, but her bed;
Men stay within the house, and stand for aye
Avengeful guardians of its shrines and graves."

Danaë, 330.

† "Who knows if that be life which we call death,
And life be dying?—save alone that men
Living bear grief, but when they yield their breath
They grieve no more and have no sorrow then."

Incert. Fab. 821.

"'Twere well for men, when first a babe draws breath,
To meet and wail the woes that he must bear;
But to salute the soul that rests from care
With songs and pæans on the path of death."

Cresphontes, 454.

"Let those who live do right ere death descendeth;
The dead are dust; mere nought to nothing tendeth."

Meleager, 537.

θάνατος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νεικέων τέλος
ἔχει· τί γὰρ τοῦδ' ἐστὶ μεῖζον ἐν βροτοῖς;
τίς γὰρ πεταῖον σκύπελον οὐτίζων δορὶ
ὀδύναισι δώσει; τίς δ' ἀτιμάζων νέκυς,
εἰ μηδὲν αἰσθάνοιντο τῶν παθημάτων;

To these should be added the magnificent words of consolation addressed by Dictys, in the tragedy that bears his name, to Danaë: *

δοκεῖς τὸν Ἅιδην σῶν τι φροντίζειν γόων
καὶ παῖδ' ἀνήσειν τὸν σὸν εἰ θέλοις στένειν;
παῦσαι· βλέπουσα δ' εἰς τὰ τῶν πέλας κακὰ
ῥᾴων γένοι' ἄν, εἰ λογίζεσθαι θέλοις
ὅσοι τε δεσμοῖς ἐκμεμόχθηνται βροτῶν,
ὅσοι τε γηράσκουσιν ὀρφανοὶ τέκνων,
τούς τ' ἐκ μεγίστης ὀλβίας τυραννίδος
τὸ μηδὲν ὄντας· ταῦτά σε σκοπεῖν χρεών.

Close to the thought of death lies that of endurance; and here is a fragment from the *Hypsipyle*, which might be placed for a motto on the title-page of *Epictetus*: †

ἔφυ μὲν οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ πονεῖ βροτῶν,
θάπτει τε τέκνα χἄτερ' αὖ κτᾶται νέα,

" In death there dwells the end of human strife;
For what mid men than death is mightier?
Who can inflict pain on the stony scaur
By wounding it with spear-point? Who can hurt
The dead, when dead men have no sense of suffering?"
Antigone, 160.

* " Think'st thou that Death will heed thy tears at all,
Or send thy son back if thou wilt but groan?
Nay, cease; and, gazing at thy nei hbour's grief,
Grow calm: if thou wilt take the pains to reckon
How many have toiled out their lives in bonds,
How many wear to old age, robbed of children,
And all who from the tyrant's height of glory
Have sunk to nothing. These things should'st thou heed."
Dictys, 334.

† " No man was ever born who did not suffer.
He buries children, then begets new sons,

αὐτός τε θνήσκει, καὶ τάδ' ἄχθονται βροτοὶ
εἰς γῆν φέροντες γῆν· ἀναγκαίως δ' ἔχει
βίον θερίζειν ὥστε κάρπιμον στάχυν,
καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸν δὲ μή· τί ταῦτα δεῖ
στένειν, ἅπερ δεῖ κατὰ φύσιν διεκπερᾶν;
δεινὸν γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς.

On Justice and the punishment of sins we may take the following passages, expressing, with dramatic energy, the intense moral conscience of the Greek race: *

δοκεῖτε πηδᾶν τἀδικήματ' εἰς θεοὺς
πτεροῖσι, κἄπειτ' ἐν Διὸς δέλτου πτυχαῖς
γράφειν τιν' αὐτά, Ζῆνα δ' εἰσορῶντά νιν
θνητοῖς δικάζειν; οὐ δ' ὁ πᾶς ἂν οὐρανὸς
Διὸς γράφοντος τὰς βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας
ἐξαρκέσειεν, οὐδ' ἐκεῖνος ἂν σκοπῶν
πέμπειν ἑκάστῳ ζημίαν· ἀλλ' ἡ Δίκη
ἐνταῦθά που 'στιν ἐγγὺς εἰ βούλεσθ' ὁρᾶν.

τήν τοι Δίκην λέγουσι παῖδ' εἶναι Διὸς
ἐγγύς τε ναίειν τῆς βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας.

They stand, however, in somewhat curious opposition to a fragment from *Bellerophon* about Divine Justice:

Then dies himself: and men forsooth are grieved,
Consigning dust to dust. Yet needs must be
Lives should be garnered like ripe harvest-sheaves,
And one man live, another perish. Why
Mourn over that which nature puts upon us?
Nought that must be is terrible to mortals."

Hypsipyle, 752.

* "Think you that sins leap up to heaven aloft
On wings, and then that on Jove's red-leaved tablets
Some one doth write them, and Jove looks at them
In judging mortals? Not the whole broad heaven,
If Jove should write our sins, would be enough,
Nor he suffice to punish them. But Justice
Is here, is somewhere near us; do but look."

Melanippide, 488.

"Justice, they say, is daughter of high Jove,
And dwells hard by to human sinfulness."

Alopé, 149.

φησίν τις εἶναι δῆτ', ἐν οὐρανῷ θεούς;
οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐκ εἰσ'. εἴ τις ἀνθρώπων λέγει,
μὴ τῷ παλαιῷ μῶρος ὢν χρήσθω λόγῳ.
σκέψασθε δ' αὐτὰ μὴ 'πι τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις
γνώμην ἔχοντες· φήμ' ἐγὼ τυραννίδα
κτείνειν τε πλείστους κτημάτων τ' ἀποστερεῖν,
ὅρκους τε παραβαίνοντας ἐκπορθεῖν πόλεις,
καὶ ταῦτα δρῶντες μᾶλλον εἰσ' εὐδαίμονες
τῶν εὐσεβούντων ἡσυχῇ καθ' ἡμέραν·
πόλεις τε μικρὰς οἶδα τιμώσας θεοὺς
αἳ μειζόνων κλύουσι δυσσεβεστέρων
λόγχης ἀριθμῷ πλείονος κρατούμεναι.*

In which of the fragments just quoted was the poet speaking in his own person? In neither, perhaps, fully; partly, perhaps, in both. About wealth he utters in like manner seemingly contradictory oracles:†

βίᾳ νυν ἕλκετ' ὦ κακοὶ τιμὰς βροτοὶ
καὶ κτᾶσθε πλοῦτον πάντοθεν θηρώμενοι
σύμμικτα μὴ δίκαια καὶ δίκαι' ὁμοῦ·
ἔπειτ' ἀμᾶσθε τῶνδε δύστηνον θέρος.

ὦ χρυσὲ, δεξίωμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,
ὡς οὔτε μήτηρ ἡδονὰς τοιάσδ' ἔχει

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* "Doth some one say that there be gods above?
There are not; no, there are not. Let no fool,
Led by the old false fable, thus deceive you.
Look at the facts themselves, yielding my words
No undue credence: for I say that kings
Kill, rob, break oaths, lay cities waste by fraud,
And doing thus are happier than those
Who live calm pious lives day after day.
How many little States that serve the gods
Are subject to the godless but more strong,
Made slaves by might of a superior army!"

Bellerophontes, 293.

† "Go to now, O ye bad men, heap up honours
By force, get wealth, hunting it whence ye can,
By indiscriminate armfuls, right and wrong;
Then reap of all these things the wretched harvest."

Ino, 420.

"Gold! of all welcome blessings thou'rt the best!
For never had a mother's smile for men,

οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώποισιν οὐ φίλος πατὴρ,
οἵας σὺ χοὶ σὲ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.
εἰ δ' ἡ Κύπρις τοιοῦτον ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰᾷ
οὐ θαῦμ' ἔρωτας μυρίους αὐτὴν τρέφειν.

In what he says of noble birth Euripides never wavers. The true democrat speaks through his verse, and yet no poet has spoken more emphatically of bravery and honour. We may take the following examples in their order:*

εἰς δ' εὐγένειαν ὀλίγ' ἔχω φράσαι καλά·
ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐσθλὸς εὐγενὴς ἔμοιγ' ἀνὴρ
ὁ δ' οὐ δίκαιος κἂν ἀμείνονος πατρὸς
Ζηνὸς πεφύκῃ δυσγενὴς εἶναι δοκεῖ.

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως σκοπεῖν χρεὼν
τὴν εὐγένειαν· τοὺς γὰρ ἀνδρείους φύσιν
καὶ τοὺς δικαίους τῶν κενῶν δοξασμάτων
κἂν ὦσι δούλων εὐγενεστέρους λέγω.

φεῦ τοῖσι γενναίοισιν ὡς ἁπανταχοῦ
πρέπει χαρακτὴρ χρηστὸς εἰς εὐψυχίαν,

Nor son, nor father dear, such perfect charm,
As thou and they who hold thee for their guest.
If Kupris darts such glamour from her gaze,
No wonder that she breeds a myriad loves!"

Bellerophontes, 288.

* "For mere high birth I have small meed of praise:
The good man in my sight is nobly born;
While he who is not righteous, though his sire
Than Zeus be loftier, seems to me but base."

Dictys, 341.

"I know not how to think of noble blood:
For men of courage and of virtuous soul,
Though born of slaves, are far above vain titles."

Melanippide, 496.

"Lo, in all places how the nobly born
Show their good breed and spirit by brave bearing!"

Danaë, 328.

ἅπας μὲν ἀὴρ αἰετῷ περάσιμος
ἅπασα δὲ χθὼν ἀνδρὶ γενναίῳ πατρίς.

Further to illustrate his conception of true nobility, using for this purpose in particular the fragments of the *Antiope*, would be easy. It appears throughout that Euripides was bent on contrasting the honour that is won by labour with the pleasures of a lazy life. Against the hedonism which lay so near at hand to pagans in the licence of the flesh, the Greeks set up an ideal of glory attainable alone by toil. This morality found expression in the famous lines of Hesiod on *ἀρετή*, in the action of Achilles, in the proverb *πάντα τὰ καλὰ χαλεπά*, and in the fable of the choice of Hercules. Euripides varies the theme in his iambics by a hundred modulations :*

νεανίαν γὰρ ἄνδρα χρὴ τολμᾶν ἀεί·
οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὧν ῥᾴθυμος εὔκλεὴς ἀνὴρ.
ἀλλ' οἱ πόνοι τίκτουσι τὴν εὐδοξίαν.

οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἡδέως ζητῶν βιοῦν
εὔκλειαν εἰσεκτήσατ' ἀλλὰ χρὴ πονεῖν.

ὁ δ' ἡδὺς αἰὼν ἡ κακή τ' ἀνανδρία
οὔτ' οἶκον οὔτε γαῖαν ὀρθώσειεν ἄν.

σὺν μυρίοισι τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται πόνοις.

"The whole wide ether is the eagle's way :
The whole earth is a brave man's fatherland."
Incert. Frag. 866.

* "A young man should be always doing, daring ;
For no slack heart or hand was ever famous.
'Tis toil and danger that beget fair fame."
Archelaus, 233.

"Who seeks to lead a life of unstirred pleasure
Cannot win fame : fame is the meed of travail."
Ibid. 234.

"A life of pleasure and unmanly sloth
Could never raise a house or State to honour."
Ibid. 235.

"Fair honour is the child of countless toils."
Ibid. 236.

ἐμὲ δ' ἄρ' οὐ
μοχθεῖν δίκαιον; τίς δ' ἄμοχθος εὐκλεής;
τίς τῶν μεγίστων δειλὸς ὢν ὠρέξατο;

The political morality deduced from this view of life is stern and noble: *

γνώμη γὰρ ἀνδρὸς εὖ μὲν οἰκοῦνται πόλεις,
εὖ δ' οἶκος, εἵς τ' αὖ πόλεμον ἰσχύει μέγα·
σοφὸν γὰρ ἓν βούλευμα τὰς πολλὰς χέρας
νικᾷ· σὺν ὄχλῳ δ' ἀμαθία πλεῖστον κακόν.

τρεῖς εἰσὶν ἀρεταὶ τὰς χρεών σ' ἀσκεῖν, τέκνον,
θεούς τε τιμᾶν τούς τε φύσαντας γονεῖς,
νόμους τε κοινοὺς Ἑλλάδος· καὶ ταῦτα δρῶν
κάλλιστον ἕξεις στέφανον εὐκλείας ἀεί.

Nor is the condemnation of mere pleasure-seeking less severe: †

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις εὖ βίον κεκτημένος
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἀμελίᾳ παρεὶς ἑᾷ,
μολπαῖσι δ' ἡσθεὶς τοῦτ' ἀεὶ θηρεύεται,
ἀργὸς μὲν οἴκοις καὶ πόλει γενήσεται

"Is it not right that I
Should toil? Without toil who was ever famous?
What slothful soul ever desired the highest?"

Archelaus, 238.

* "'Tis judgment that administers the State,
The household, and in war of force is found;
For one wise word in season hath more strength
Than many hands. Crowds and no brains breed ruin."

Antiope, 205.

"There are three virtues to observe, my son:
Honour the gods, the parents that begot you,
The laws that govern Hellas. Follow these,
And you will win the fairest crown of honour."

Ibid. 221.

† "The man who, when the goods of life abound,
Casts to the winds economy, and spends
His days in seeking after feast and song,
At home and in the State will be a drone,

φίλοισι δ' οὐδείς· ἡ φύσις γὰρ οἴχεται
ὅταν γλυκείας ἡδονῆς ἥσσων τις ᾖ.

The indifference induced by satiety is well characterised in the following lines: *

κόρος δὲ πάντων· καὶ γὰρ ἐκ καλλιόνων
λέκτροις ἐπ' αἰσχροῖς εἶδον ἐκπεπληγμένους.
δαιτὸς δὲ πληρωθεὶς τις ἄσμενος πάλιν
φαύλῃ διαίτῃ προσβαλὼν ἥσθη στόμα.

In the foregoing specimens no selection has been made of lines remarkable for their æsthetic beauty. This omission is due to Stobæus, who was more bent on extracting moral maxims than strains of poetry comparable with the invocation of Hippolytus to Artemis. Two, however, I have marked for translation on account of their artistic charm; the first for its pretty touch of picturesqueness, the second for its sympathy with sculpture: †

πολὺς δ' ἀνεῖρπε κισσὸς εὐφυὴς κλάδος
χελιδόνων μουσεῖον.

ἔα· τίν' ὄχθον τόνδ' ὁρῶ περίρρυτον
ἄφρῳ θαλάσσης, παρθένου τ' εἰκὼ τινα
ἐξ αὐτομόρφων λαΐνων τειχισμάτων
σοφῆς ἄγαλμα χειρός.

And to his friends be nothing. Character
Is, for the slaves of honeyed pleasure, gone."

Antiope, 196.

* "There is satiety of all things. Men
Desert fair wives to dote on ugly women;
With rich meat surfeited, they gladly turn
To humble fare, and find fresh appetite."

Ibid. 187.

† "Much ivy crept around, a comely growth,
The tuneful haunt of swallows."

Alcmene, 91.

"What! Do I see a rock with salt sea-foam
Surrounded, and the image of a maiden
Carved from the stony bastions nature-wrought
By some wise workman's craft?"

Andromeda, 127.

Some passages, worthy of preservation, yet not easily classified, may wind up the series. Here is "Envy, eldest born of hell:" *

> *τίς ἆρα μήτηρ ἢ πατὴρ κακὸν μέγα*
> *βροτοῖς ἔφυσε τὸν δυσώνυμον φθόνον;*
> *ποῦ καί ποτ' οἰκεῖ σωμάτων λαχὼν μέρος;*
> *ἐν χερσὶν ἢ σπλάγχνοισιν ἢ παρ' ὄμματα*
> *ἔσθ' ἡμίν; ὡς ἦν μόχθος ἰατροῖς μέγας*
> *τομαῖς ἀφαιρεῖν ἢ ποτοῖς ἢ φαρμάκοις*
> *πασῶν μεγίστην τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις νόσων.*

The next couplet is pregnant with a home-truth which most men have had occasion to feel: †

> *ἅπαντές ἐσμεν εἰς τὸ νουθετεῖν σοφοὶ*
> *αὐτοὶ δ' ὁτὰν σφαλῶμεν οὐ γιγνώσκομεν.*

The value attached by Greek political philosophers to the *ηθος*, or temperament, of States, and their dislike of demagogy, are accounted for in these four lines: ‡

> *τρόπος ἐστὶ χρηστὸς ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου.*
> *τὸν μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἂν διαστρέψαι ποτὲ*
> *ῥήτωρ δύναιτο, τὸν δ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω*
> *λόγοις ταράσσων πολλάκις λυμαίνεται.*

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* "What mother or what father got for men
That curse unutterable, odious envy?
Where dwells it? In what member lies its lair?
Is it our hands, our entrails, or our eyes
That harbour it? Full ill would fare the leech
Who with the knife, or potions, or strong drugs,
Should seek to clear away this worst disease."

Ino, 418.

† "We all are wise for giving good advice,
But when we fail we have no wisdom left."

Incert. Fab. 862.

‡ "Good ways of feeling are more safe than law:
No rhetorician can upset the one;
The other he may tumble upside down
With words, and do it often grievous wrong."

Peirithous, 598.

One single line, noticeable for its weighty meaning, and Euripidean by reason of its pathos, shall end the list: *

νέος πόνοις δέ γ' οὐκ ἀγύμναστος φρένας.

The lasting title to fame of Euripides consists in his having dealt with the deeper problems of life in a spirit which became permanent among the Greeks, so that his poems, like those of Menander, never lost their value as expressions of current philosophy. Nothing strikes the student of later Greek literature more strongly than this prolongation of the Euripidean tone of thought and feeling. In the decline of tragic poetry the literary sceptre was transferred to comedy, and the comic playwrights may be described as the true successors of Euripides. The dialectic method, degenerating into sophistic quibbling, which he affected, was indeed dropped, and a more harmonious form of art than the Euripidean was created for comedy by Menander, when the Athenians, after passing through their disputatious period, had settled down into a tranquil acceptation of the facts of life. Yet this return to harmony of form and purity of perception did not abate the influence of Euripides. Here and there throughout his tragedies he had said once and for all, and well said, what the Greeks were bound to think and feel upon important matters, and his sensitive, susceptible temperament repeated itself over and over again among his literary successors. The exclamation of Philemon that, if he could believe in immortality, he would hang himself to see Euripides, is characteristic not only of Philemon but also of the whole Macedonian period of Greek literature.

* "Young, but in spirit not untrained by trouble."
Dictys, 332.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST TRAGIC POETS.

Apparent Accident in the Preservation of Greek Poetry.—Criticism among the Ancients.—Formation of Canons.—Libraries.—The Political Vicissitudes of Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople.—Byzantine Scholarship in the Ninth Century.—The Lost MS. of Menander.—Tragic Fragments preserved by the Comic Poets and their Scholiasts; by Athenæus, by Stobæus.—Aristotle.—Tragedy before Æschylus.—Fragments of Aristarchus.—The *Medea* of Neophron.—Ion.—The *Games* of Achæus.—Agathon.—His Character for Luxurious Living.—The *Flower*.—Aristotle's Partiality for Agathon.—The Family of Æschylus.—Meletus and Plato among the Tragic Playwrights.—The School of Sophocles.—Influence of Euripides.—Family of Carkinus.—Tragedians ridiculed by Aristophanes.—The *Sisyphus* of Critias.—Cleophon.—Cynical Tragedies ascribed to Diogenes.—Extraordinary Fertility of the Attic Drama.—The Repetition of Old Plots.—Mamercus and Dionysius.—Professional Rhetoricians appear as Playwrights.—The School of Isocrates.—The *Centaur* of Chærêmon.—His Style.—The *Themistocles* of Moschion.—The Alexandrian Pleiad.—The *Adonis* of Ptolemy Philopator.

Among the losses in Greek literature few are so tantalising as the almost absolute extinction of the tragic poets who preceded and followed the supreme Athenian triumvirate. It would have been exceedingly interesting to trace the history of the Drama from its rude origins up to the point at which the creative genius of Æschylus gave it an inalienable character, and again to note the deviation of the tragic muse from heroic themes to fables of pure fiction under the influence of Agathon. This pleasant task of analytical criticism,

concordant with the spirit of our age, which is not satisfied with admiring masterpieces unless it can also understand the law of their growth and mark the several stages in the process of historical development, will fall to the lot of no student now, unless, indeed, Pompeii render up a treasure-house of MSS. as yet undreamed of, and Signor Fiorelli save the priceless leaflets of charred tinder from destruction.

Why is it that out of the seventy plays of Æschylus only seven are extant; of the Sophoclean one hundred and thirteen (allowing seventeen others which bore his name to have been spurious) only seven; while eighteen—or, if we admit the *Rhesus*, nineteen—are the meagre salvage from the wreck of at least seventy-five dramas by Euripides? Why is it that of their lost tragedies we possess but inconsiderable fragments—just enough to prove that the compilers of commonplace books like Stobæus might, if they had pleased, have gratified our curiosity beyond the dreams of a Renaissance scholar's covetousness? Why, again, is it that of Agathon, whose dramatic romance, *The Flower*, was thought worthy of citation by Aristotle, whom Aristophanes named as Ἀγάθων ὁ κλεινός, ἀγαθὸς ποιητὴς καὶ πιθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις,* whose thanksgiving banquet supplied a frame for Plato's dialogue on Love, and whose style, if faithfully depicted by the philosopher, was a very "rivulet of olive oil noiselessly running"—why is it that of this Agathon we know nothing but what may be inferred from the caricature of the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, the portrait of the *Symposium*, and a few critical strictures in the *Poetics*? Why is it that Ion, who enjoyed a great renown (περιβόητος ἐγένετο) and ranked as fifth in the muster-roll of Athenian tragic poets, is now but a mere empty name? To these questions, which might be rhetorically multiplied *ad infinitum* on a hundred tones of querulous and sad expostulation with the past, there is no satisfactory answer. Not, as Bacon asserted, has time borne down upon his flood the froth and trash of things;

* "Agathon the famous, a good poet, and lovable to his friends."

far rather may we thank fate that the flotsam and the jetsam that have reached our shore include the best works of antiquity. Yet, notwithstanding this, "the iniquity of oblivion," in the words of Sir Thomas Browne, "blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity."

The students of antiquity attached less value than we do to literature of secondary importance. It was the object of their criticism, especially in the schools of Alexandria, to establish canons of perfection in style. The few great authors who were deemed worthy to rank as standards received unlimited honour, nor was it thought too much by Aristarchus or Aristophanes to devote a lifetime to their service. For inferior poets, whom we should prize as necessary to a full comprehension of the history of art, they felt less respect, not having grasped the notion that æsthetics are a branch of science, that the topmost peaks of Parnassus tower above the plain by gradual ascent from subordinate mountain-ranges, and that those who seek to scale the final altitudes must tread the intermediate heights. They were contented with representative men. Marlowe, according to their laws of taste, would have been obscured by Shakspeare; while the multitude of lesser playwrights, whom we honour as explaining and relieving by their comradeship the grandeur of *the* dramatist (ὁ τραγῳδοποιὸς they might have styled Shakspeare, as their Pindar was ὁ λυρικός), would have sunk into oblivion, leaving him alone in splendid isolation. Much might be said for this way of dealing with literature. By concentrating attention on undeniable excellence, a taste for the noblest things in art was fostered, while the danger that we run of substituting the historical for the æsthetic method was avoided.* In our own

* Aristophanes, the grammarian, and Aristarchus included five tragic poets—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Ion, and Achæus—in the first rank. In a second series they placed the works of the so-called Pleiad,

century Auguste Comte has striven to revive the cultus of unique standards and to re-establish the empire of selective canons.

The Scholiasts of Alexandria, working in vast libraries which contained the whole treasures of Greek literature, decided that only a few poets were worthy of minute study. The works of these few poets, again, they classified into masterpieces and inferior productions. A further selection sifted those that seemed best suited for the education of youth. Thus it happened that copies were repeated of certain well-established favourites; and so the treasures of dramatic poetry inherited by us represent the taste of scholiasts and teachers rather than the likings of the Attic audience. To judge by references in the plays of Aristophanes, the lost *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, the lost *Andromeda* of Euripides, enjoyed more popularity at Athens than even the *Agamemnon* or the *Medea*. Alexandrian and Byzantine pedagogues thought otherwise, and posterity was bound to be their pensioner. The difficulty of multiplying codices must be added as a most important cause of literary waste. It is doubtful whether we should now possess more than a few plays of Shakspeare and Jonson out of the whole voluminous Elizabethan literature, but for the accident of printing. When we consider the circumstances under which the Attic dramatists survived, taking into account the famous fraud whereby Ptolemy Euergetes possessed himself of the MS. of Æschylus,* and remembering the vicissitudes successively of Alexandria, of Rome, and of Byzantium, perhaps we ought to be surprised that the sum total of our inheritance is so great. What the public voice of the Athenians

seven tragic poets who at Alexandria revived the style of the Attic drama. Their names were Homerus, Sositheus, Lycophron, Alexander, Philiscus, Sosiphanes, and Dionysiades.

* The story is told with wonderful vividness by Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 176–194.

had approved, the scholiasts of Alexandria winnowed. What the Alexandrians selected, found its way to Rome. What the Roman grammarians sanctioned, was carried in the dotage of culture to Byzantium. At each transition the peril by land and sea to rare codices, sometimes probably to unique autographs, was incalculable. Then followed the fury of iconoclasts and fanatics, the fire-brands of Omar, the remorseless crusade of churchmen against paganism, and the three great conflagrations of Byzantium. It is humiliating to the nations of Western Europe to compare the wealth of Greek books enjoyed by Photius in the ninth century, even after the second burning, with the meagre fragments which seem to have survived the pillage of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204. To this final disaster we ought probably to assign the destruction of the larger portion of Greek literature. In addition to all the ruin wrought by fire and pillage must be reckoned the slow decay of learning during the centuries of intellectual apathy that preceded the fall of the Eastern Empire. What the fire and the Frank had spared, was still exposed to the tooth of the worm and to the slow corrosion of dust, damp, and mildew.

When the passion for antiquity was rekindled in the fourteenth century by the Italians, they eagerly demanded from Constantinople the treasures that the capital of Greece contained: nor is there any good reason to suppose that the Turkish troops of Mahomet II. in 1453 destroyed many books that had not previously been transferred in copies to Florence and Venice. During at least a quarter of a century before the downfall of the Byzantine Empire the princes of Italy were eagerly competing with each other for the purchase of Greek manuscripts; and throughout this period it was the immediate interest of the Palæologi to lay them under such obligations as might enlist their sympathy and call forth a return of friendly service. For the Emperor to have closed the doors of the Byzantine libraries against the agents of the Medici and the

Venetian nobles, at the same time that he was sending Manuel Chrysoloras as an ambassador for aid against the Turks to Western Europe, would have been ridiculous. We must also bear in mind how many eager Italian scholars, supported by exhibitions from the lords of Florence, and supplied with almost unlimited credit for the purchase of literary treasures, pursued their studies at Constantinople and returned, like bees, book-laden with the honey of old learning, home; how many Levant merchants, passing to and fro between Italian and Greek ports, discovered that parchments were a more profitable freight than gems or spices. Taking all this into consideration, and duly weighing Curzon's competent opinion —"so thoroughly were these ancient libraries (of Athos) explored in the fifteenth century that no unknown classic author has been discovered, nor has any MS. been found of greater antiquity than some already known in the British Museum and other libraries"—we have the right to infer that what the printing-press of Aldus made imperishable, was all or nearly all that the degenerate scholars of the later age of Hellas cared to treasure. The comparative preservation of Neoplatonic philosophy, for example, when contrasted with the loss of dramatic literature, may be referred to the theological and mystical interests of Byzantine students. Only one codex of first-rate importance is supposed to have perished in Italy after importation from Byzantium and before the age of printing. That was a MS. of Menander, which Vespasiano, the Florentine bookseller, mentioned among the gems of the library of Urbino.* Little, however, was known about the Greek dramatic poets at the time when Vespasiano wrote his Lives, and it is not impossible that what he took for a collection of Menander's plays, was really a commonplace book of such fragments as we still possess. Yet the mere mention of this volume

* *Vite di Uomini Illustri*, p. 97. He catalogues "tutte l'opere di Sofocle; tutte l'opere di Pindaro; tutte l'opere di Menandro."

raises curious speculation. We know that when Cesare Borgia possessed himself of Urbino in 1502 he carried off from the ducal palace a booty in jewels, plate, furniture, and books, to the value of 150,000 ducats. Some of the MSS. found their way into the Vatican collection; others were restored to Urbino, whence they were again transferred to Rome after the extinction of the ducal family in the seventeenth century. It is conceivable that the Menander, if it existed, may have been lost in the hurry of forced marches and the confusion that involved the Borgia's career. Had it been stolen, the thief could hardly have offered it for sale in its splendid dress of crimson velvet and silver clasps stamped with the arms of Montefeltro. It may even now be lurking somewhere in obscurity—a treasure of more value than the Koh-i-noor.

Putting aside the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, it may be broadly stated that what survives of the other tragic poets of the Attic stage, and what we know about their lives, have been derived in the main from four sources. The plays of Aristophanes and the fragments of the later comic poets, who were the merciless critics of contemporary tragedians, have, in the first place, supplied us with some meagre quotations and with numerous insignificant caricatures. From these questionable authorities we learn, for instance, that Agathon was a man of effeminate manners, that Philocles was horribly ugly, that Morsimus was an indifferent eye-doctor as well as a writer of tame tragedies, that Meletus had no inspiration, that the whole family of Carkinus were barbarians, that Pythangelus and Akestor were no better than slaves, that Gnesippus mismanaged his choruses, that Hieronymus delighted in horrors, that Nothippus and Morychus were gluttons, that Moschion was a parasite, and so forth. To attach very much weight to comic squibs which dwell exclusively upon personal defects and foibles, and repeat *ad nauseam* the stock Athenian calumnies of drunkenness and debauchery, would be uncritical;

though it must be borne in mind that satire in a Greek city, where all the eminent burghers were well known to the play-goers, was pointless unless it contained a grain of truth. Our second great authority is Athenæus, a man of wide reading and extensive curiosity, whose heart unhappily was set on trifles. Sauces, unguents, wreaths, the various ways of dressing fish, the changes of fashion in wine-drinking, formed the subjects of his profoundest investigations. Therefore the grave and heightened tragedies of our unfortunate poets were ransacked by him for rare citations, capable of throwing light upon a flower, a dish, or a wine-cup. These matters were undoubtedly the veriest *parerga* to poets bent on moving the passions of terror and pity; nor can we imagine a more distressing torment for their souls in Hades than to know that what remains of a much-pondered and beloved *Thyestes*, is a couple of lines about a carving-knife or meat-dish. To be known to posterity through a calumny of Aristophanes and a citation in the *Deipnosophistæ*, after having passed a long life in composing tragedies, teaching choruses, and inventing chants, is a caricature of immortality which might well deter a man of common sense from literature, and induce the vainest to go down speechless to the grave in peace. Those poets who fell under the hands of Stobæus, our third chief source of information, have fared better. It is more consistent with the aims and wishes of a tragic artist to survive, however mangled, in the commonplace book of a moralist than in the miscellanies of a literary *bon vivant*. The authors, therefore, of the Euripidean school,

> Teachers best
> Of moral prudence, with delight received,
> In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
> Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,

may be said to have fared better than their predecessors, whose style rendered them less conveniently subject to the eclectic process of the Macedonian collector. Much of the difficulty,

however, which obscures the text of these sententious fragments arises from their collector having in all probability quoted from memory, so that bad grammar, trivial terminations to otherwise well-worded lines, and passages ruthlessly compressed by omissions are frequent. In the fourth place we have to thank Aristotle for a few most precious, though, alas, laconic, criticisms pronounced in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* upon his contemporaries, and for occasional quotations in the *Ethics* to Nicomachus and Eudemus. These criticisms help us to understand the history of the Greek drama by throwing a dim light upon the serious art of many defunct poets, who in their day shook the Attic Scene. To Plutarch, to Pausanias, and to the Scholiasts we owe similar obligations, though the value of their critical remarks is slight compared with that of every word which fell from Aristotle's pen.

This rapid enumeration of the resources at our command will prepare any one familiar with such matters for spare and disappointing entertainment. The chief interest of such a survey as that which I propose to make consists in the variety and extent of the lost dramatic literature that it reveals. Nothing but a detailed examination of existing fragments suffices to impress the mind with the quantity of plays from which malignant fortune has preserved samples, fantastically inadequate, and, in many cases, tantalisingly uncharacteristic. The quotations from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, meanwhile, have already supplied matter of more sterling and intrinsic value.

When we take up the collection of *Perditorum Tragicorum Omnium Fragmenta* published at Paris by the care of M. Ambroise Firmin Didot, our first sensation, on seeking what may possibly be left of poets before Æschylus, is one of liveliest disappointment. Thespis, to begin with, is a name: we know that he made tragedy dramatic instead of dithyrambic, by introducing monologue in order to support and rest the

Chorus; but that is all. Chœrilus is a name: we know that he exhibited above fifty plays, that he was reckoned worthy by the comic poet Alexis to be cited together with Hesiod, Homer, and Epicharmus, and that Aristotle devoted three lost books of critical discussions to the elucidation of difficult passages in his poems as well as in those of Archilochus and Euripides. All the rest is obscure, except that we have reason to believe that Chœrilus excelled in the satyric drama. Pratinas, again, is a name. Dim tradition reports that he invented the satyric drama; and it has thence been inferred with probability that the 150 plays ascribed to him were chiefly composed in tetralogies of one comic and three serious pieces. He was also celebrated for the excellence of his lyrics; while a story, preserved by Suidas, relates how an accident that happened to the wooden stage at Athens during the exhibition of one of his tragedies, led to the building of the recently discovered theatre of Dionysus. A few unimportant fragments have survived, in two of which Pratinas avows his preference for the Æolian mood in music. Phrynichus, though his poems have fared no better than those of his contemporaries, stands before us with a more distinguished personality. Herodotus tells the famous tale of his tragedy upon the *Taking of Miletus*, which moved the Athenian audience to tears, and so angered them by the vivid presentation of a recent disaster that they fined the author in a sum of 1000 drachmas, and forbade the acting of his drama. The sweetness of the songs of Phrynichus has reached us like the echo of a bird's voice in a traveller's narrative. Aristophanes, who loved the good old music of his youth, delighted in it, and invented one of his rare verbal conglomerates to express its quality: *καὶ μινυῤῥίζοντες μέλη ἀῤῥχαιομελησιδωνοῤῥυνιχήῤῥατα* is a phrase he puts into the mouth of Bdelycleon in the *Wasps*, while in the *Frogs* he describes Phrynichus as making harvest in the meadows of the Muses. Agathon, again, in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* is represented saying;

And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—
Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed;
And this, we cannot doubt, was why his plays
Were beautiful; for 'tis a natural law
That like ourselves our work must ever be.

From the passage just referred to in the *Frogs* (1298–1307) it is clear that much of a tragic poet's reputation for originality at Athens depended upon the invention of melodies; and that the merit of Phrynichus consisted to some extent in the excellence and sweetness of his tunes. No real light can now be thrown upon the dark subject of Greek music in general, and of its relation to lyrical and tragic poetry in particular. All we know serves to excite our inquisitiveness without satisfying it. Thus Plutarch informs us that Phrynichus and Æschylus preferred the harp (κίθαρα) and adhered to the enharmonic scale (ἁρμονία) instead of employing chromatic modulations (χρώματα). The general drift of this remark is that the early tragic poets maintained a simple and severe style of music, and avoided the allurements of what Aristotle termed the most artificial of the Greek scales. Collateral value is given to Plutarch's observation by the Aristophanic criticism of the melodies in Agathon and Euripides. For speculations on its deeper significance, it is impossible to do more than refer the curious to Professor Donkin, General Perronet Thompson, and Mr. Chappell, with the reiterated warning that the obscurity of the subject is impenetrable. Phrynichus, in conclusion, was celebrated as a ballet-master for his Pyrrhic dances, and as a practical dramatist for the introduction of female characters. One line, among the few ascribed to him, calls for quotation by reason of its beauty:

λάμπει δ' ἐπὶ πορφυρέαις παρῇσι φῶς ἔρωτος,
The light of love burns upon crimson cheeks.

Aristias, the next in order of these lost poets, was a son of Pratinas, who lived long enough to compete with Sophocles. The names of his plays, *Antæus*, *Atalanta*, *Cyclops*, *Orpheus*, and *The Fates*, show, like similar lists which might be quoted

from the meagre notices of his predecessors, that the whole material of Greek mythology was handled and rehandled by the Attic playwrights.

The tragedians who follow can certainly not be considered older than Æschylus, and are, all of them, most probably his juniors. Aristarchus, a native of Tegea, calls for notice because he is reported by Suidas to have determined the length of tragedies, whatever that may mean. Ennius translated his drama of *Achilles* into Latin, which proves that he retained the fame of a first-rate poet till the beginning of the Græco-Roman period. His fragments recall the Euripidean style; and the two best of them have been preserved by Stobæus, the notorious admirer of Euripides. To omit these, in the dearth of similar heirlooms from antiquity, would be wasteful, especially as they serve to determine the date at which he wrote, and to confirm the report of Suidas that he was a contemporary of Euripides. Here is one that savours strongly of agnosticism : *

> καὶ ταῦτ' ἴσον μὲν εὖ λέγειν ἴσον δὲ μή·
> ἴσον δ' ἐρευνᾶν, ἐξ ἴσου δὲ μὴ εἰδέναι·
> πλεῖον γὰρ οὐδὲν οἱ σοφοὶ τῶν μὴ σοφῶν
> εἰς ταῦτα γιγνώσκουσιν· εἰ δ' ἄλλου λέγει
> ἄμεινον ἄλλος, τῷ λέγειν ὑπερφέρει.

The second treats of love : †

> ἔρωτος ὅστις μὴ πεπείραται βροτῶν,
> οὐκ οἶδ' ἀνάγκης θεσμόν· ᾧ πεισθεὶς ἐγὼ
> οὕτω κρατηθεὶς τάσδ' ἀπεστάλην ὁδούς·

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* "Fair speech in such things and no speech are one :
Study and ignorance have equal value :
For wise men know no more than simple fools
In these dark matters ; and if one by speaking
Conquer another, mere words win the day."

† "That man who hath not tried of love the might
Knows not the strong rule of necessity,
Bound and constrained, whereby this road I travel ;

οὗτος γὰρ ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸν ἀσθενῆ σθένειν
τίθησι, καὶ τὸν ἄπορον εὐρίσκειν πόρον.

Next to Aristarchus of Tegea we find Neophron of Sikyon, who claims particular attention as the author of a tragedy acknowledged by antiquity to have been the original of the *Medea* of Euripides. There are few students of literature who do not recognise in the *Medea* the masterpiece of that poet, and who have not wondered why it only won the third prize at Athens, in the year 431 B.C. Is it possible that because Euripides borrowed his play from Neophron—τὸ δρᾶμα δοκεῖ ὑποβαλέσθαι παρὰ Νεόφρονος διασκευάσας are the words of the Greek argument to *Medea*, while Suidas says of Neophron οὗ φάσιν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ Εὐριπίδου Μήδειαν—therefore the public and the judges thought some deduction should be made from the merit of the drama?

Stobæus has handed down a long and precious fragment from the speech in which Neophron's Medea decides to kill her children. A comparison of this fragment with the splendid rhesis composed for Medea by Euripides proves the obligation owed by the younger poet to the elder, both in style and matter.

Here, then, is the monologue of Neophron's Medea: *

εἶεν· τί δράσεις θυμέ; βούλευσαι καλῶς
πρὶν ἢ 'ξαμαρτεῖν καὶ τὰ προσφιλέστατα
ἔχθιστα θέσθαι. ποῖ ποτ' ἐξῆξας τάλας;
κάτισχε λῆμα καὶ σθένος θεοστυγές.
καὶ πρὸς τί ταῦτ' ὀδύρομαι, ψυχὴν ἐμὴν

Yea, our lord, Love, strengthens the strengthless, teaches
The craftless how to find both craft and cunning."

* "Well, well; what wilt thou do, my soul? Think much
Before this sin be sinned, before thy dearest
Thou turn to deadliest foes. Whither art bounding?
Restrain thy force, thy god-detested fury.
And yet why grieve I thus, seeing my life

ὁρῶσ' ἔρημον καὶ παρημελημένην
πρὸς ὧν ἐχρῆν ἥκιστα ; μαλθακοὶ δὲ δὴ
τοιαῦτα γιγνόμεσθα πάσχοντες κακά ;
οὐ μὴ προδώσεις θυμὲ σαυτὸν ἐν κακοῖς.
οἴμοι δέδοκται· παῖδες ἐκτὸς ὀμμάτων
ἀπέλθετ'· ἤδη γάρ με φοινία μέγαν
δέδικε λύσσα θυμόν· ὦ χέρες, χέρες,
πρὸς οἷον ἔργον ἐξοπλιζόμεσθα· φεῦ·
τάλαινα τόλμης, ἥ πολὺν πόνον βραχεῖ
διαφθεροῦσα τὸν ἐμὸν ἔρχομαι χρόνῳ.

It is hardly possible not to recognise in these lines the first sketch of the picture afterwards worked out so elaborately in detail by Euripides.

Ion was a native of Chios, who came while still a boy (*παντάπασι μειράκιον*) to Athens, and enjoyed the honour of supping with Cimon in the house of a certain Laomedon. Of his life and work very little is known, although his reputation among the ancients was so great that the Alexandrians placed him among the first five tragic poets. The titles of eleven of his plays have been preserved ; but these were only few out of many that he wrote. He was, besides, a voluminous prose-author, and practised every kind of lyrical poetry. From the criticism of Longinus we gather that his dramas were distinguished for fluency and finish rather than for boldness of conception or sublimity of style. After praising their regularity, Longinus adds that he would not exchange the *Œdipus* of Sophocles for all the tragedies of Ion put together. Personally,

Laid desolate, despitefully abandoned
By those who least should leave me? Soft, forsooth,
Shall I be in the midst of wrongs like these?
Nay, heart of mine, be not thy own betrayer!
Ah me! 'Tis settled. Children, from my sight
Get you away! for now bloodthirsty madness
Sinks in my soul and swells it. Oh, hands, hands,
Unto what deed are we accoutred? Woe!
Undone by my own daring! In one minute
I go to blast the fruit of my long toil."

Ion had the reputation of a voluptuary: φιλοπότην καὶ ἐρωτικώτατον are the words of Athenæus which describe him. There is also a story that he passed some portion of his life at Corinth in love-bondage to the beautiful Chrysilla. In short, both as a man and as an artist, Ion was true to his name and race. It is unfortunate that the few fragments we possess of Ion's tragedies have been transmitted for the most part by Hesychius and Athenæus in illustration of grammatical usages and convivial customs. The following gnomic couplet, preserved by Plutarch, is both interesting in itself and characteristic of the poet's style: *

> τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν, τοῦτ' ἔπος μὲν οὐ μέγα,
> ἔργον δ', ὅσον Ζεὺς μόνος ἐπίσταται θεῶν.

Another passage, quoted by Sextus Empiricus, contains an elegant description of the power of Sparta: †

> οὐ γὰρ λόγοις Λάκαινα πυργοῦται πόλις,
> ἀλλ' εὖτ' Ἄρης νεοχμὸς ἐμπέσῃ στρατῷ,
> βουλὴ μὲν ἄρχει, χεὶρ δ' ἐπεξεργάζεται.

Almost less can be said about Achæus of Eretria, the fifth, with Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Ion, in the Alexandrian πρώτη τάξις or first class of tragic worthies. Diogenes Laertius records his skill in the satyric drama; Athenæus remarks that his style was obscure, and that he filled his plays with riddles. The names of some of his dramas—*Linus, The Fates, Philoctetes at Troy, Omphale, Peirithous*—excite our curiosity; but the fragments are, as usual, cited for some merely frivolous or pedantic purpose.

The following corrupt passage from a play called Ἀθλοι or Ἀθλα, *The Games*—the loss of which is greatly to be regretted,

* "Know thou thyself—the saw is no great thing;
To do it, Zeus alone of gods is able."

† "The town of Sparta is not walled with words;
But when young Ares falls upon her men,
Then reason rules and the hand does the deed."

since it might have thrown a new light upon the feeling of the Greeks for their public contests—presents a lively picture of the physical splendour of trained athletes: *

> γυμνοὶ γὰρ ὤθουν φαιδίμους βραχίονας
> ἢ ἦγ' σφριγῶντες ἐμπορεύονται, νέῳ
> στίλβοντες ἄνθει καρτερὰς ἐπωμίδας·
> ἄδην δ' ἐλαίου στέρνα καὶ ποδῶν κύτος
> χρίουσιν, ὡς ἔχοντες οἴκοθεν τρυφήν.

Another glimpse of athletes may be got from three lines torn out of the same play: †

> πότερα θεωροῖς εἶτ' ἀγωνισταῖς λέγεις;
> πόλλ' ἐσθίουσιν, ὡς ἐπασκούντων τρόπος.
> ποδαποὶ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ ξένοι; Βοιώτιοι.

In this portrait we recognise the young men satirically described by Euripides in a fragment, translated above, of the lost *Autolycus* as roaming about the city in the radiant insolence of youth, like animated statues.

Mourn as we may the loss of Ion and Achæus, our grief for that of Agathon must needs be greater. Though he was not placed in the first class by the Alexandrian critics, it is clear from the notices of Plato, Aristophanes, and Aristotle, that he enjoyed the widest popularity at Athens, and was, besides, a poet of marked originality. Personally, he was amiable, delicate, pleasure-loving, and extremely beautiful. He is always called—even by Plutarch and Athenæus—Ἀγάθων

* It is clear that γὰρ ὤθουν is wrong. The best suggestion seems to be γ' ἄνωθεν, adopting which we may render the lines thus:

> "Naked above, their radiant arms displaying,
> In lustihood of ruffling youth, and bloom
> Of beauty bright on stalwart breasts, they fare;
> Their shoulders and their feet in floods of oil
> Are bathed, like men whose homes abound in plenty."

† "Ambassadors or athletes do you mean?
Great feeders are they, like most men in training.
Of what race are the strangers, then? Bœotians."

ὁ καλός, Agathon the beautiful; while the passionate friendship with which he had inspired Pausanias is celebrated by Plato in *Protagoras*, by Xenophon in the *Symposium*. Later authors, like Maximus Tyrius, gave him the title of ἁβρότατος, while Lucian compared him to Cinyras or Sardanapalus. Apparently he was rich enough to indulge the most luxurious tastes. One of the best comic scenes in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* is that in which Aristophanes described Agathon surrounded by all the appliances of a voluptuary, while engaged in the composition of an effeminate play. Euripides, entering this study of a Sybarite, implores him to put on female attire, using these arguments:*

σὺ δ' εὐπρόσωπος, λευκὸς, ἐξυρημένος,
γυναικόφωνος, ἁπαλὸς, εὐπρεπὴς ἰδεῖν.

In poetry Agathon adopted innovations consistent with his own voluptuous temperament. His style was distinguished by melodious sweetness and rhetorical refinements; in particular, we are told that he affected the flowery tropes and the antitheses of Gorgias. Sophistry was fashionable in his youth, and Aristophanes recognised in Agathon the true companion of Euripides. Leaving the severer music of the elder tragedians, he invented chromatic melodies, which seem to have tickled the sensuality of his Athenian audience.†

We are therefore justified in regarding Agathon as the creator of a new tragic style combining the verbal elegances and ethical niceties of the sophists with artistic charms of a luxurious kind. Aristotle observes that he separated

* "While you are smooth-faced, white-skinned, closely shaven,
Voiced like a woman, tender, fair to see."

† This is strongly expressed in an untranslatable speech of Mnesilochus (Ar. *Thesmoph.* 130 *et seq.*) which reminds one of the first satire of Persius:

Cum carmina lumbum
Intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ut intima versu.

the Chorus from the action of the drama to such an extent that his lyrics became mere musical interludes (ἐμβόλιμα) equally adapted to any tragic fable.* He also remarks that Agathon composed plays upon romantic subjects, inventing the story for himself, instead of adhering to the old usage of re-handling mythological material.† The title of one of these dramatic romances, *The Flower*, has been preserved; but unhappily we are told nothing about its subject, and have no extracts to judge from. That the form of tragedy suffered other changes at the hands of Agathon, may be inferred from another passage in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle censures him for having included a whole epic, *The Taking of Troy*, in one play.‡ This play, it may be said in passing, was hissed off the stage. The popularity of Agathon may be gathered from the fact that the first tetralogy he exhibited was crowned in 416 B.C. Plato has chosen the supper-party which he gave in celebration of this victory for the scene of the *Symposium*; and it is there that we must learn to know this brilliant man of letters and of fashion in the wittiest period of Attic social life. It is not a little curious that the most interesting fragments of Agathon are embedded in the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, who must have made attentive study of his works. While discussing the subject of free-will, the sage of Stageira quotes this couplet: §

μόνου γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται,
ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἅσσ' ἂν ᾖ πεπραγμένα.

Again, on the topic of art and chance, he cites: ‖

τέχνη τύχην ἔστερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην.

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* *Poet.* cap. 18. † *Ibid.* cap. 9. ‡ *Ibid.* cap. 18.

§ "For from this one thing God himself is barred—
To make what's done as though it ne'er had been."

‖ "Art is true friend of chance, and chance of art."

Speaking in the *Eudemian Ethics* about the true and spurious kinds of courage, he adds :*

καθάπερ καὶ Ἀγάθων φησί·
φαῦλοι βροτῶν γὰρ τοῦ πονεῖν ἡσσώμενοι
θανεῖν ἐρῶσι.

Another quotation, for the sake of both the poet and the philosopher, may be adduced from the *Rhetoric:* †

καὶ μὴν τὰ μέν γε τῇ τέχνῃ πράσσειν, τὰ δὲ
ἡμῖν ἀνάγκῃ καὶ τύχῃ προσγίγνεται.

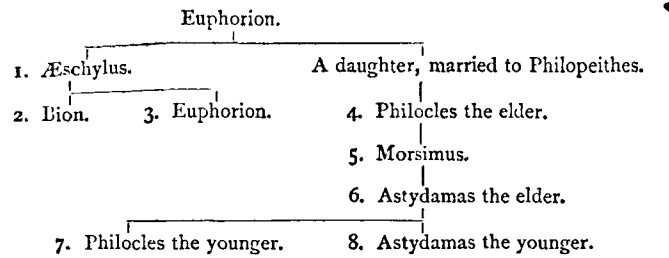
One of the peculiarities to be noticed in the practice of the poetic art among the Greeks was the formation of schools by families of artists, in whom talent continued to be hereditary for several generations. We observe this among the lyrists; but the tragedians offer even more remarkable instances, proving how thoroughly the most complicated of all the arts, the tragic drama—including, as it did, the teaching of music and of dancing to Choruses, the arrangement of stage effects, and the training of actors—was followed as a profession at Athens. That Phrynichus founded a school of playwrights distinguished for their musical rather than their dramatic ability, appears from the nineteenth section of the *Problemata* of Aristotle; but we do not know whether the *οἱ περὶ Φρύνιχον* there mentioned belonged to the poet's family. It is possible, on the other hand, to draw the pedigree of Æschylus, in which every name will represent a tragic poet. Here it is:

* "Even as saith also Agathon:

Worsted by suffering, cowards dote on death."

† I have followed Grotius in transposing *τύχῃ* and *τέχνῃ*, and translate:—

"Thus some things we can do by art, while some
Are thrust on us as fate and fortune will."



The οἱ περὶ Αἰσχύλον, therefore, of whom the Scholiasts often speak, numbered, together with Æschylus himself, eight dramatists. Their common characteristic consisted in the adherence to the Æschylean style, in the presentation of tetralogies, and in the privilege successively enjoyed by them of bringing out old plays of Æschylus in competition with the works of younger poets. The dramas of Æschylus were in fact "a property" to his descendants. The Athenians had publicly decreed that they might be from year to year produced upon the scene, and Euphorion, his son, spent his time in preparing them for exhibition. In this way he gained four prizes, taking the first crown upon the notable occasion in 431 B.C., when Sophocles was second, and Euripides, with the *Medea*, third. It appears that, as time went on, the original compositions of Æschylus suffered mutilations and alterations at the hands of his posterity, who pretended to improve them—after the manner of Davenant, presumably—and adapt them to the modern taste. At last Lycurgus, about 340 B.C., decreed that after accurate copies had been taken of the authorised text and deposited in the public archives, the clerk of the city should collate them with the acted plays, and see that no deviations from the original became established. We gather from the comic poets that the family of Æschylus also produced their own tragedies, none of which, however, appear to have been very excellent. Philocles the elder was laughed at by Aristophanes partly because he was an ugly, snub-nosed, little man, with a head like a hoopoe, partly

because he introduced a comic incident into his tragedy of *Pandionis* by exhibiting Tereus dressed out with the feathers of a bird. The Scholiasts to Aristophanes, in like manner, inform us that Morsimus owed a certain celebrity to his ugliness, to the tameness of his tragic style, and to his want of skill as a professional oculist. Astydamas the elder achieved the same sad sort of immortality through the accident of having received the honour of a public statue before Æschylus. It is lost labour trying to form a clear conception of poets who are only known to us in anecdotes like these.

Frederick Wagner, the collector of the tragic fragments, reckons Meletus, the accuser of Socrates, and Plato, the divine philosopher, among the school of Æschylus, because it appears that both of them composed tetralogies. From a passage in the Scholiast to Aristophanes (*Frogs*, 1302) it may be inferred that Meletus, the tragedian, and Meletus, the informer, were one and the same person: κωμῳδεῖται δὲ καὶ ὡς ψυχρὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει καὶ ὡς πονηρὸς τὸν τρόπον—"he is satirised both for want of genius as a poet and also for the badness of his moral character." This sentence constitutes his title to fame. He is known to have composed a series of plays with the title *Œdipodeia*, the plot, as sketched by Hyginus,* offering some notable divergences from the Sophoclean treatment of the tale of Thebes. Plato may be numbered among the tragedians on the strength of an anecdote in Ælian,† according to which he had composed a tetralogy, and had already distributed the parts to the actors, when he determined to abandon poetry, and gave his verses to the flames.

The school of Sophocles includes two sons of the poet, Iophon and Ariston, and his grandson Sophocles. In fact, it combines the actors in that family drama played out before the jury of the tribe, when the singer of Colonus silenced

* *Fab.* 172.

† *Varia Historia*, ii. 30. Compare Diog. Laert. iii. 80

his accuser by the recitation of the Chorus from his second *Œdipus*. Iophon exhibited tragedies with distinguished success during the life of Sophocles, and even entered into competition with his father. After the old man's death he produced the posthumous works that formed his heirloom, completing such as were unfinished, or executing those of which the plan was sketched in outline. He is said to have exhibited fifty plays, and that he was no mean poet appears from the following passage of the *Frogs*:*

H. Is not Iophon a good one?—He's alive, sure.
B. If he's a good one, he's our only good one;
But it's a question; I'm in doubt about him.
H. There's Sophocles; he's older than Euripides—
If you go so far for 'em, you'd best bring him.
B. No; first I'll try what Iophon can do,
Without his father, Sophocles, to assist him.

The drift of these lines would be obscure without some explanation to readers who have not studied Aristophanes. All the good tragic poets are dead, and Dionysus is journeying to Hades to fetch one back again to rule the Attic stage. Herakles falls into conversation with him on the subject, and reminds him that Iophon is living. The doubt expressed by Dionysus seems to refer to a suspicion prevalent at Athens that Sophocles helped his son in the composition of his plays. Meanwhile, the qualified praise awarded him by Dionysus implies considerable admiration on the part of so severe a castigator of the tragic dramatists as Aristophanes. Only four and a half lines, and these by no means noticeable, remain of Iophon. His half brother Ariston has fared better, since we possess a long and curious dialogue upon Providence, quoted by Theophilus of Antioch from an unknown play of his. This fragment supports the Christian belief that, though the careless seem to prosper, while the virtuous get no benefit from their

* Frere's translation, p. 229.

asceticism, justice will eventually be dealt with even hand to all :

χωρὶς προνοίας γίνεται γὰρ οὐδὲ ἕν.

It is right to add that the authorship of these lines must be at least considered doubtful, and that their versification, as it now stands, is unworthy of the Attic drama.

By the middle of the fourth century before Christ the whole dramatic literature of the Athenians, both tragic and comic, was being penetrated with the Euripidean spirit. It is impossible not to notice in the style of these later playwrights either the direct influence of Euripides or else the operation of the laws of intellectual development he illustrated. We cannot, therefore, treat the Euripidean school with the definiteness applicable to that of Æschylus or Sophocles. At the same time it is certain that a son or a nephew bearing his name continued to exhibit his posthumous dramas.

A stronger instance of histrionic and dramatic talent transmitted through four generations is presented by the family of Carkinus, some of whom were famous for mimetic dancing, while others contended in the theatre as playwrights. What we know about Carkinus and his children is chiefly derived from the satires of Aristophanes, who was never tired of abusing them. Their very name serves as a scarecrow, and the Muse is invoked to keep them off the stage. To stir the rubbish-heap of obscure allusions and pedantic annotations, in order to discover which of the six Carkinidæ we know by name were poets, and which of them were dancers, is a weary task not worth the labour it involves. Suffice it to say that the grandson of Aristophanes' old butt, himself called Carkinus, produced the incredible number of 160 dramas, was three times mentioned with respect by Aristotle,* and has survived in comparatively copious quotations. One passage, though not

* *Poet.* cap. 17 ; *Rhet.* ii. 23, iii. 16.

very remarkable for poetical beauty, is interesting because it describes the wanderings of Demeter through Sicily in search of Persephone. Diodorus, who cites it from an unknown play, mentions that Carkinus frequently visited Syracuse and saw the processions in honour of Demeter.

About the Attic tragedians who lived during the old age of Aristophanes, the first thing to notice is that they may fairly be called the Epigoni of Euripides. Æschylus was old-fashioned. The style of Sophocles did not lend itself to easy imitation. The psychological analyses, casuistical questions, rhetorical digressions, and pathetic situations, wherein the great poet of the *Hippolytus* delighted, were exactly suited to the intellectual tastes and temper of incipient decadence. A nation of philosophers and rhetoricians had arisen; and it is noteworthy that many of the playwrights of this period were either professed orators or statesmen. In his own lifetime Aristophanes witnessed the triumph of the principles against which he fought incessantly with all the weapons of the comic armoury. Listen to the complaint of Dionysus in the *Frogs*:*

H. But have not you other ingenious youths
That are fit to out-talk Euripides ten times over—
To the amount of a thousand, at least, all writing tragedy?
D. They're good for nothing—"Warblers of the Grove"—
"Little, foolish, fluttering things"—poor puny wretches,
That dawdle and dangle about with the tragic muse,
Incapable of any serious meaning.

To translate the Greek for modern readers is not possible. The pith of the passage is found in this emphatic phrase, γόνιμον δὲ τοιητὴν ἂν οὐκ εὕροις ἔτι, "there's not a sound male poet capable of procreation left." Accordingly he vents his venom on Pythangelus, Gnesippus, Akestor, Hieronymus, Nothippus, Morychus, Sthenelus, Dorillus, Spintharus, and Theognis, without mercy. Not a single fragment remains to judge these wretched poets by. It is better to leave them in

* Frere, p. 229.

their obscurity than to drag them forth into the dubious light of comic ribaldry.

Critias, the son of Callæschrus, the pupil of Socrates, who figures in so many scenes of Xenophon and Plato, and who played a memorable part in the political crisis of 404 B.C., was a tragic poet of some talent, if we are to accept a fragment from the *Sisyphus* as his. Sextus Empiricus transcribed forty lines of this drama, setting forth the primitive conditions of humanity. First, says Critias, men began by living like the brutes, without rewards for virtue or punishment for vice. Mere might of hand prevailed. Then laws were framed and penalties affixed to crime. Open violence was thus repressed; but evil-doers flourished in secret. Fraud and hypocrisy took the place of force. To invent the dread of gods and to create a conscience was the next step taken by humanity. Then followed the whole scheme of religion, and with religion entered superstition, and men began to fear the thunder and to look with strange awe on the stars. The quotation is obviously imperfect: yet it may advantageously be compared with the speeches of Prometheus in Æschylus, and also with the speculations of Lucretius. The hypothesis of deliberate invention implied in the following phrases,*

> τηνικαῦτά μοι
> δοκεῖ πυκνός τις καὶ σοφὸς γνώμην ἀνὴρ
> γνῶναι θέον θνητοῖσιν,

and τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,† sufficed not only for antiquity but also for those modern theorists who, like Locke, imagined that language was produced artificially by wise men in counsel, or who, like Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, maintained that religions were framed by knaves to intimidate fools.

* "Then, I think,
A man of subtle counsel and keen wit
Discovered God for mortals."

† "Introduced the notion of deity."

Cleophon demands a passing notice, because we learn from Aristotle* that he tried to reduce tragedy to the plain level of common life by using everyday language and not attempting to idealise his characters. The total destruction of his plays may be regretted, since it is probable that we should have observed in them the approximation of tragedy to comedy which ended finally in the new comic style of the Athenians. About Cleophon's contemporary, Nicomachus, of whom nothing is known except that he produced a great many tragedies on the stock subjects of mythology, nothing need be said. The case is somewhat different with a certain Diogenes who while writing seven tragedies under the decorous titles of *Thyestes*, *Helen*, *Medea*, and so forth, nevertheless contrived to offend against all the decencies of civilised life. Later grammarians can hardly find language strong enough to describe their improprieties. Here is a specimen: *ἀῤῥήτων ἀῤῥητότερα καὶ κακῶν πέρα, καὶ οὔτε ὅτι φῶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἀξίως ἔχω . . . . οὕτω πᾶσα μὲν αἰσχρότης, πᾶσα δὲ ἀπόνοια ἐν ἐκείναις τῷ ἀνδρὶ περιλοτέχνηται.* To ascribe these impure productions to Diogenes the Cynic, in spite of his well-known contempt for literature, was a temptation which even the ancients, though better informed than we are, could not wholly resist. Yet, after much sifting of evidence, it may be fairly believed that there were two Diogenes—the one an Athenian, who wrote an innocuous play called *Semele*, the other a native, perhaps, of Gadara, who also bore the name of Œnomaus, and who perpetrated the seven indecent parodies. Diogenes of Sinope, meanwhile, was never among the poets, and the plays that defended cannibalism and blasphemed against the gods, though conceived in his spirit, belonged probably to a later period.†

* *Poet.* caps. ii., xxii.; *Rhet.* iii. 7.

† The whole matter is too obscure for discussion in this place. Suffice it to add that a certain Philiscus, the friend and follower of Diogenes, enjoyed a portion of the notoriety attaching to the seven obnoxious dramas.

Time would fail to tell of Antiphon and Polyeides, of Crates and Python, of Nearchus and Cleænetus, of the Syracusan Achæus and of Dikaiogenes, of Apollodorus and Timesitheus and Patrocles and Alkimenes and Apollonius and Hippotheon and Timocles and Ecdôrus and Serapion—of all of whom it may be briefly said we know a few laborious nothings. Their names in a list serve to show how the sacred serpent of Greek tragedy, when sick to death, continued still for many generations drawing its slow length along. Down to the very end they kept on handling the old themes. Timesitheus, for instance, exhibited *Danaides*, *Ixion*, *Memnon*, *Orestes*, and the like. Meanwhile a few pale shades emerge from the nebulous darkness, demanding more consideration than the mere recording of their names implies. We find two tyrants, to begin with, on the catalogue—Mamercus of Catana, who helped Timoleon, and Dionysius of Syracuse. Like Nero and Napoleon III., Dionysius was very eager to be ranked among the authors. He spared no expense in engaging the best rhapsodes of the day, and sent them to recite his verses at Olympia. To deceive a Greek audience in matters of pure æsthetics was, however, no easy matter. The men who came together attracted by the sweet tones of the rhapsodes, soon discovered the badness of the poems and laughed them down. Some fragments from the dramas of Dionysius have been preserved, among which is one that proves his preaching sounder than his practice : *

ἡ γὰρ τυραννὶς ἀδικίας μήτηρ ἔφυ.

The intrusion of professional orators into the sphere of the theatre might have been expected in an age when public speaking was cultivated like a fine art, and when opportunities for the display of verbal cleverness were eagerly sought. We are not, therefore, surprised to find Aphareus and Theodectes, distinguished rhetoricians of the school of Isocrates, among the

* "The rule of one man is of wrong the parent."

tragedians. Of Theodectes a sufficient number of fragments survive to establish the general character of his style; but it is enough in this place to notice the fusion of forensic eloquence with dramatic poetry, against which Aristophanes had inveighed, and which was now complete.

Chærêmon and Moschion are more important in the history of the Attic drama, since both of them attempted innovations in accordance with the literary spirit of their age, and did not, like the rhetoricians, follow merely in the footsteps of Euripides. Chærêmon, the author of *Achilles Thersitoctonos* and several other pieces, was mentioned by Aristotle for having attempted to combine a great variety of metres in a poem called *The Centaur*,* which was, perhaps, a tragi-comedy or ἱλαροτραγῳδία. He possessed remarkable descriptive powers, and was reckoned by the critics of antiquity as worthy of attentive study, though his dramas failed in action on the stage. We may regard him, in fact, as the first writer of plays to be read.† The metamorphoses through which the arts have to pass in their development, repeat themselves at the most distant ages and under the most diverse circumstances. It is, therefore, interesting to find that Chærêmon combined with this descriptive faculty a kind of euphuism which might place him in the same rank as Marini and Calderon, or among the most refined of modern Idyllists. He shrank, apparently, from calling things by their plain names. Water, for example, became in his fantastic phraseology ποταμοῦ σῶμα. The flowers were "children of the spring," ἔαρος τέκνα —the roses, "nurslings of the spring," ἔαρος τιθηνήματα—the stars, "sights of the firmament," αἰθέρος θεάματα—ivy, "lover of dancers, offspring of the year," χορῶν ἐραστὴς ἐνιαυτοῦ παῖς —blossoms, "children of the meadows," λειμώνων τέκνα, and so forth. In fact, Chærêmon rivals Gongora, Lyly, and Herrick on their own ground, and by his numerous surviving fragments

* *Poet.* i., xxiv. † See Ar. *Rhet.* iii. 12.

proves how impossible it is to conclude that the Greeks of even a good age were free from affectations. Students, who may be interested in tracing the declensions of classic style from severity and purity, will do well to read the seventeen lines preserved by Athenæus from the tragedy of *Œneus*.* They present a picture of girls playing in a field, too artful for successful rendering into any but insufferably ornate English.

The claim of Moschion on our attention is different from that of his contemporary Chærêmon. He wrote a tragedy with the title of *Themistocles*, wherein he appears to have handled the same subject-matter as Æschylus in the *Persæ*. The hero of Salamis was, however, conspicuous by his absence from the history-play of the elder poet. Lapse of time, by removing the political difficulties under which the *Persæ* was composed, enabled Moschion to make the great Themistocles his protagonist. Two fragments transmitted by Stobæus from this drama, the one celebrating Athenian liberty of speech, while the other argues that a small band may get the better of a myriad lances, seem to be taken from the *concio ad milites* of the hero: †

> καὶ γὰρ ἐν νάπαις βραχεῖ
> πολὺς σιδήρῳ κείρεται πεύκης κλάδος,
> καὶ βαιὸς ὄχλος μυρίας λόγχης κρατεῖ.

Another tragedy of Moschion, the *Pheræi*, is interesting when compared with the *Antigone* of Sophocles and the *Sisyphus* ascribed to Critias. Its plot seems in some way to have turned upon the duty which the living owe the dead: ‡

> κενὸν θανόντος ἀνδρὸς αἰκίζειν σκιάν·
> ζῶντας κολάζειν οὐ θανόντας εὐσεβές.

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* Athen. xiii. p. 608*a*.

† "In far mountain vales
See how one small axe fells innumerous firs;
So a few men can curb a myriad lances."

‡ "'Tis vain to offer outrage to thin shades;
God-fearers strike the living, not the dead."

And, again, in all probability from the same drama: *

τί κέρδος οὐκέτ' ὄντας αἰκίζειν νεκρούς;
τί τὴν ἄναιδον γαῖαν ὑβρίζειν πλέον;
ἐπὴν γὰρ ἡ κρίνουσα καὶ θηδίονα
καὶ τάνιαρὰ φροῦδος αἴσθησις φθαρῇ,
τὸ σῶμα κωφοῦ τάξιν εἴληφεν πέτρου.

A long quotation of thirty-four iambics, taken apparently in like manner from the *Pheræi*, sets forth the primitive condition of humanity. Men lived at first in caverns, like wild beasts. They had not learned the use of iron; nor could they fashion houses, or wall cities, or plough the fields, or garner fruits of earth. They were cannibals and preyed on one another. In course of time, whether by the teaching of Prometheus or by the evolution of implanted instincts, they discovered the use of corn, and learned how to press wine from the grape. Cities arose and dwellings were roofed in, and social customs changed from savage to humane. From that moment it became impiety to leave the dead unburied; but tombs were dug, and dust was heaped upon the clay-cold limbs, in order that the old abomination of human food might be removed from memory of men. The whole of this passage, very brilliantly written, condenses the speculations of Athenian philosophers upon the origin of civilisation, and brings them to the point which the poet had in view—the inculcation of the sanctity of sepulture.

Nothing more remains to be said about the Attic tragedians. At the risk of being tedious, I have striven to include the names at least of all the poets who filled the tragic stage from its beginning to its ending, in order that the great number of playwrights and their variety might be appreciated. The

* "What gain we by insulting mere dead men?
What profit win taunts cast at voiceless clay?
For when the sense that can discern things sweet
And things offensive is corrupt and fled,
The body takes the rank of mere deaf stone."

probable date at which Thespis began to exhibit dramas may be fixed soon after 550 B.C. Moschion may possibly have lived as late as 300 B.C. These, roughly calculated, are the extreme points of time between which the tragic art of the Athenians arose and flourished and declined. When the Alexandrian critics attempted a general review of dramatic literature, they formed, as we have seen already, two classes of tragedians. In the first they numbered five Athenian worthies. The second, called the Pleiad, included seven poets of the Court of Alexandria; nor is there adequate reason to suppose that this inferior canon, δευτέρα τάξις, was formed on any but just principles of taste. How magnificent was the revival of art and letters, in all that pertained, at any rate, to scenic show and pompous ritual, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; how superbly the transplanted flowers of Greek ceremonial flourished on the shores of ancient Nile, and how Hellenic customs borrowed both gorgeous colours and a mystic meaning from the contact with Egyptian rites, may be gathered from the chapters devoted by Athenæus in the fifth book of the *Deipnosophistæ* to these matters. The Pleiad and the host of minor Alexandrian stars have fared, however, worse than their Athenian models. They had not even comic satirists to keep their names alive "immortally immerded." With the exception of Lycophron, they offer no firm ground for modern criticism. We only know that, in this Alexandrian Renaissance, literature, as usual, repeated itself. Alexandria, like Athens, had its royal poets, and, what is not a little curious, Ptolemy Philopator imitated his predecessor Dionysius to the extent of composing a tragedy, *Adonis*, with the same title and presumably upon the same theme.

CHAPTER X.

THE COMIC FRAGMENTS.

Three Periods in Attic History.—The Three Kinds of Comedy: Old, Middle, New.—Approximation of Comedy to the Type of Tragedy.—Athenæus as the Source of Comic Fragments.—Fragments of the Old Comedy.—Satire on Women.—Parasites.—Fragments of the Middle Comedy.—Critique of Plato and the Academic Philosophers.—Literary Criticism.—Passages on Sleep and Death.—Attic Slang.—The *Demi-Monde*.—Theophrastus and the Later Rhetoricians.—Cooks and Cookery Books.—Difficulty of Defining the Middle from the New Comedy.—Menander.—Sophocles and Menander.—Epicureanism.—Menander's Sober Philosophy of Life.—Goethe on Menander.—Philemon.—The Comedy of Manners culminated in Menander.—What we mean by Modernism.—Points of Similarity and Difference between Ancient and Modern Comedy.—The Freedom of Modern Art.

THE two centuries during which comedy flourished at Athens may be divided into three marked periods of national and political existence. Between 448 and 404 B.C., under the Periclean administration and until the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Demos continued through all vicissitudes conscious of sovereignty and capable of indefinite expansion. Then came the dismantlement of Athens by Lysander and the dismemberment of the old democracy. From 404 to 338 B.C., Athens, though humbled to the rank of a second-class State, and confused in foreign and domestic policy, retained her freedom, and exercised an important influence over the affairs of Hellas. She no longer, however, felt within herself the force of youth, the ambition of conquest, or the pride of popular autocracy.

Her intellectual activity was turned from political and constitutional questions inwards to philosophy and literature. From 338 to about 260 B.C. this metamorphosis of the nation was carried further and accomplished. Athens ceased to be a city of statesmen and orators, and became the capital of learning. She was no longer in any true sense free or powerful, though populous and wealthy and frequented by cultivated men of all nations. Not only had public interest declined, but the first fervour for philosophy was past. A *modus vivendi* suited to a tranquil, easy, pleasure-loving people, who rejoiced in leisure and combined refined amusements with luxury, had been systematised in the Epicurean view of life. To accept the conditions of existence and to make the best of them, to look on like spectators at the game of the world, and to raise no troublesome insoluble questions, was the ideal of this period. Fifty years after the last date mentioned, the Romans set their foot on Hellas, and Greek culture began to propagate itself with altered forms in Italy.

To these three periods in the national existence of Athens, the three phases through which comedy passed, correspond with almost absolute accuracy. Emerging from the coarse Megarian farces and the phallic pageants of the Dionysian Kômos, the old comedy, as illustrated by Aristophanes, allowed itself the utmost licence. It incarnated the freedom of democracy, caricaturing individuals, criticising constitutional changes, and, through all its extravagances of burlesque and fancy, maintaining a direct relation to politics. Only a nation in the plenitude of self-contentment, conscious of vigour and satisfied with its own energy, could have tolerated the kind of censorship these comic poets dared to exercise. The glaring light cast by Aristophanes upon abuses in the State reminded his audience of the greatness and the goodness that subsisted with so much of mean and bad. From their high standpoint of security they could afford, as they imagined, to laugh,

and to enjoy a spectacle that travestied their imperfections. At the same time an under-current of antagonism to the Aristophanic comedy made itself felt from time to time. Laws were passed prohibiting this species of the drama in general (μὴ κωμῳδεῖν), or restricting its personality (μὴ κωμῳδεῖν ὀνομαστί), or prohibiting the graver functionaries of the State from exhibiting comic plays. These laws, passed, abrogated, and repassed, between 440 and 404 B.C., mark the ebb and flow of democratic liberty. After the humiliation of Athens at the close of the Peloponnesian War, the political subject-matter of the old comedy was withdrawn, and the attitude of the audience was so altered as to render its peculiar censorship intolerable. Meanwhile, the speculative pursuits to which the Athenians since the days of the sophists had addicted themselves, began to tell upon the character of the nation, now ripe for the second or literary stage of comedy. The poets of this period had not yet arrived at the comedy of manners which presents a close and faithful picture of domestic life. They directed their wit and humour against classes rather than characters. Philosophers and poets, parasites and hetæræ, took the place of the politicians. Nor did they abandon the old art-form of Attic comedy, for it is clear that the Chorus still played an important part in their plays. At the same time, in comedy as in tragedy, the Chorus came to be less and less an integral part of the drama; and while more attention was paid to plot and story, the grotesque allegories of the first period were dropped. The transition from the old to the middle comedy is signalised by the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, which, maintaining the peculiar character of the elder form of art, relinquished politics for literature. The new comedy, known to us through the fragments of Menander and the Latin imitations, abandoned the Chorus altogether, and produced a form of art corresponding to what we know as the comedy of character and manners in the modern world. Interest was

concentrated on the fable, and the skill of the poet was displayed in accurate delineations of domestic scenes. The plot seems to have almost invariably turned on love adventures. Certain fixed types of character—the parasite, the pimp, the roguish servant, the severe father, the professional captain, the spendthrift son, the unfortunate heroine, and the wily prostitute —appeared over and over again. To vary the presentation of these familiar persons taxed the ingenuity of the playwright, as afterwards in Italy and France, during the tyranny of pantaloon and matamore, Leandre and prima amorosa.

Tragedy and comedy, though they began so differently, had been gradually approximating to one type, so that between Menander and the latest followers of Euripides there was scarcely any distinction of form and but little difference of subject-matter. The same sententious reflection upon life seasoned both species of the drama. The religious content of the elder tragedy and the broad burlesque of the elder comedy alike gave place to equable philosophy. The tragic climax was sad; the comic climax gay: more licence was allowed in the comic than in the tragic iambic: comedy remained nearer to real life and therefore more interesting than tragedy. Such, broadly speaking, were the limits of their differences now. In this approximation toward artistic similarity, comedy rather than tragedy was a gainer. It is clear that the Aristophanic comedy could not have become permanent. To dissociate it from the peculiar conditions of the Athenian democracy was impossible. Therefore the process by which the old comedy passed into the middle, and the middle into the new, must be regarded as a progression from the local and the accidental to the necessary and the universal. The splendour that may seem to have been sacrificed, belonged less to the old comedy itself than to the genius of Aristophanes, who succeeded in engrafting the most brilliant poetry upon the rough stock of the Attic farce. Tragedy, on the contrary, lost all when she descended from

the vantage-ground of Æschylus. It must not, however, be imagined that the change in either case depended upon chance. It was necessitated by the internal transmutation of the Athenians into a nation of students, and by the corresponding loss of spontaneity in art. For the full development of the comedy of manners a critical temper in the poet and the audience, complexity of social customs, and inclination to reflect upon them, together with maturity of judgment, were required. These conditions, favourable to art which seeks its motives in a spirit of tolerant, if somewhat cynical, philosophy, but prejudicial to the highest serious poetry, account for the decline of tragedy and the contemporaneous ascent of comedy in the fourth century B.C. The comedy of Menander must therefore be considered as an advance upon that of Cratinus, though it is true that this comedy is the art of refined and senescent, rather than of vigorous and adolescent, civilisation, and though it flourished in the age of tragic dissolution. In the Vatican may be seen two busts, of equal size and beauty, wrought apparently by the same hand, and finished to the point of absolute perfection. One of these is Tragedy, the other Comedy. The two faces differ chiefly in the subtle smile that plays about the lips of Comedy, and in the slight contraction of the brows of Tragedy. They are twin sisters, born alike to royalty, distinguished by such traits of character as tend to disappear beneath the polish of the world. There is no suggestion of the Cordax in the one or of the Furies in the other. Both are self-restrained and dignified in ideality. It was thus that the two species of the drama appeared to the artists of the later ages of Hellenic culture.

The student of Greek fragments may not inaptly be compared to a man who is forming a collection of seaweeds. Walking along the border of the unsearchable ocean, he keeps his eyes fixed upon the pools uncovered at low tide, and with his foot turns up the heaps of rubbish cast upon the shore.

Here and there a rare specimen of coloured coralline or delicately fibred alga attracts his attention. He stoops, and places the precious fragment in his wallet, regretting that all his wealth is but the alms of chance, tossed negligently to him by the fretful waves and wilful storms. To tread the submarine gardens where these weeds and blossoms flourish, is denied him. Even so the scholar can do no more than skirt the abysses of the past, the unsearchable sea of oblivion, garnering the waifs and strays offered him by accident.

As Stobæus provides the most extensive repertory of extracts from the later Greek tragedians, so it is to Athenæus we must turn for comic fragments. This *helluo librorum* boasted that he had read eight hundred plays of the middle comedy, and it is obvious that he was familiar with the whole dramatic literature of Athens. Yet the use he made of this vast knowledge was comparatively childish. Interested for the most part in Deipnosophy, or the wisdom of the dinner-table, he displayed his erudition by accumulating passages about cooks, wines, dishes, and the Attic market. From an exclusive study, therefore, of the extracts he transmitted, we might be led to imagine that the Greek comedians exaggerated the importance of eating and drinking to a ridiculous extent. This, however, would be a false inference. The ingenuity of the Deipnosophist was shown in bringing his reading to bear upon a single point, and in adorning the philosophy of the kitchen with purple patches torn from poetry. We ought, in truth, rather to conclude that Attic comedy was an almost inexhaustible mine of information on Attic life in general, and that illustrations, infinitely various, of the manners, feelings, prejudices, literature, and ways of thinking of the ancient Greeks might have been as liberally granted to us as the culinary details which amused the mind of Athenæus.

When so much remains intact of Aristophanes, it is not worth while to do more than mention a few of the fragments

preserved from the other playwrights of the old comedy. The first of these in Meineke's collection may be translated, since it stands, like a motto, on the title-page of all Greek comedy:* "Hear, O ye people! Susarion says this, the son of Philinus, the Megarian, of Tripodiscus: Women are an evil; and yet, my countrymen, one cannot set up house without evil; for to be married or not to be married is alike bad." In turning over the pages of Meineke,† we feel inclined to call attention to the beauty of some lines on flowers written by Pherecrates [*Metalles*, fr. 2, and *Persai*, fr. 2], and to a curious passage on the changes wrought by Melanippides, Kinesias, and Timotheus in Attic music [*Cheiron*, fr. 1]. The comic description of the Age of Gold by Telecleides [*Amphictyones*, fr. 1] might be paralleled by Heine's picture of heaven, where the geese flew about ready roasted with ladles of sweet sauce in their bills. What Hermippus says about the Attic market [*Phormophoroi*, fr. 1] is interesting for a different reason, since it throws real light upon the imports into Attica. The second fragment from the same comedy yields curious information about Greek wines. After mentioning the peculiar excellences of several sorts, the poet gives the palm to Saprias, so called because of its old, mellow, richly scented ripeness. "When the jar is opened, a perfume goes abroad of violets and roses and hyacinths, a wonderful scent that fills the house. This nectar is ambrosia and nectar in one. Keep it for my friends, but to my enemies give Peparethian." Eupolis supplies a description of parasites [*Kolakes*, fr. 1]: the first detailed picture of a class that played a prominent part in Attic social life.‡

* Compare Anaxandrides [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1]; Eubulus [*Chrysilla*, fr. 2, *Nannion*, fr. 1]; Alexis [*Manteis*, fr. 1., *Incert. Fab.* fr. 34, 39]; and the anonymous fragments on p. 756 of Didot's *Comici Græci*.

† I shall use the edition of Didot, one vol., 1855, for reference.

‡ Compare Antiphanes [*Didumoi*, fr. 2, *Progonoi*, fr. 1]; Alexis [*Kubernetes*, fr. 1]; Diodorus [*Epikleros*, fr. 1]; Timocles [*Drakontion*, fr. 1]; the long passage from an uncertain play of Nicolaus. The invention of

We may also mention, in passing, the fragment of a parabasis [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1] which censures the Athenian audience for preferring foreign to native poets, and contains a reference to Aristophanes. Phrynichus yields the beautiful epitaph on Sophocles [*Mousai*, fr. 1] already quoted;* nor must his amusing caricature of a bad musician be passed over [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1], for the sake of this line:

Μουσῶν σκελετὸς, ἀηδόνων ἠπίαλος, ὕμνος Ἄιδου,

"Mummy of Muses, ague of nightingales, hymn of Hades." Those who are curious about Greek games will do well to study the description of the cottabos in Plato [*Zeus Kakoumenos*, fr. 1], and to compare with it a fuller passage from Antiphanes † [*Aphroditës Gonai*]. Plato, again, presents us with a lively picture of a Greek symposium [*Lacones*, fr. 1], as well as a very absurd extract from a cookery book, whereof the title was Φιλοξένου καινή τις Ὀψαρτυσία, "A new Sauce-science by Philoxenus" [*Phaon*, fr. 1]. From Ameipsias might be selected for passing notice an illusion to Socrates [*Konnos*, fr. 1] and a scolion in two lines upon life and pleasure, sung to the flute at a drinking-party [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1]. Finally, Lysippus has spoken the praises of Athens in three burlesque iambics ‡ [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1]: "If you have never seen Athens, you are a stock; if you have seen her, and not been taken captive, a donkey; if you are charmed and leave her, a pack-ass."

the part of the Parasite is usually ascribed to Alexis, but this is clearly a mistake. That he developed it and made it a fixed character of comedy is probable enough. The *Symposium* of Xenophon furnishes curious matter on the professional joker and diner-out, as he existed at Athens.

* See above, p. 220.

† The following anonymous line (Didot's *Comici Græci*, p. 732), συνεπίνομέν τε καὶ συνεκοτταβίζομεν, "together we drank, and played at cottabos together," seems to point to the good fellowship of the game.

‡ Compare the praises of Athens quoted from anonymous comic poets by Athenæus, i. 20, B., and by Dio Chrysost., 64, p. 334, Reisk (Didot's *Comici Græci*, pp. 723, 729).

On quitting the old for the middle comedy we find ourselves in a different intellectual atmosphere. The wit is more fine-spun, the humour more allusive; language, metre, and sententious reflections begin alike to be Euripidean. The fertility of the playwrights of this period was astounding. Antiphanes, one of the earliest, produced, according to some authorities, 260, and Alexis, one of the latest, 245 comedies on a great variety of subjects. It is doubtful, however, whether the authorship of these plays was accurately known by the Byzantine Greeks, from whom our information is derived. The fragments show that a strong similarity of style marked the whole school of poets, and that the younger did not scruple to pilfer freely from the elder. On the whole, the question of authorship is of less interest than the matters brought to light by such extracts as we possess. It has been remarked above that ridicule of the philosophers and parodies of the tragic poets were standing dishes in the middle comedy. Antiphanes has a fling at the elegant attire of the academic sages [*Antaios*], while Ephippus describes a philosophical dandy of the same school [*Nauagos*, fr. 1, p. 493]. Their doctrines are assailed with mild sarcasm. A man, when asked if he has a soul, replies: "Plato would tell me I don't know, but I rather think I have" [Cratinus, *Pseudupobolimaios*, p. 516]. In another play some one is gently reminded that he is talking of things about which he knows nothing—like Plato [Alexis, *Ankylion*, p. 518]. Again, Plato is informed that his philosophy ends in knowing how to frown * [Amphis, *Dexidemides*, p. 482]. In another place it is discovered that his *summum bonum* consists in refraining from marriage and enjoying life [Philippides, *Ananeosis*, fr. 2, p. 670]. Other philosophers, the Pythagoreans [Alexis, *Tarantini*, frs. 1, 2, 3, pp. 565, 566], and Aristippus [*Galatea*, fr. 1, p. 526], for example, come in for their share of

* Compare Alexis [*Hippeus*, p. 536; *Meropis*, p. 550; *Olympiodorus*, p. 552; *Parasitus*, fr. 3, p. 558].

ridicule. The playwrights not unfrequently express their own philosophy, sad enough beneath the mask of mirth. Very gloomy, for example, is the view of immortality recorded by Antiphanes [*Aphrodisios*, fr. 2, p. 358]; while the comparison by Alexis of human life to a mad pastime enjoyed between two darknesses [p. 566] has something in it that reminds one of a dance of death. Very seldom has the insecurity of all things, leading to devil-may-care self-indulgence, been more elegantly expressed than by Antiphanes [*Stratiotes*, fr. 1, p. 397]. Anaxandrides, for his part, formulates theological agnosticism in words memorable for their pithy brevity [*Canephorus*, p. 422].

ἅπαντές ἐσμεν πρὸς τὰ θεῖ' ἀβέλτεροι
κοὐκ ἴσμεν οὐδέν·

We're all mere dullards in divinity
And know just nothing.

One thing is clear in all such utterances, that the deeper speculations of Plato and Aristotle had taken no hold on the minds of the people at large, and that such philosophy as had penetrated Athenian society, was a kind of hedonistic scepticism. Epicurus in the next age, had nothing to do but to give expression to popular convictions. Take, for one instance more, these lines from Amphis [*Gynæcocratia*, p. 481]:

πῖνε, παῖζε· θνητὸς ὁ βίος· ὀλίγος οὑπὶ γῆ χρόνος.
ἀθάνατος δ' ὁ θάνατός ἐστιν, ἂν ἅπαξ τις ἀποθάνῃ.

Drink and play, for life is fleeting; short our time beneath the sky:
But for death, he's everlasting, when we once have come to die.

Occasionally, the same keen Attic wit is exercised upon old-fashioned Greek proverbs. Simonides had said that health, beauty, and moderate wealth were the three best blessings. Anaxandrides demurs [*Thesaurus*, fr. 1, p. 421]: the poet was most certainly mad; for a handsome man, if he be poor, is but an ugly beast.

A few of the fragments throw some light upon dramatic literature. Antiphanes [*Poesis*, fr. 1, p. 392] compares tragedy and comedy with covert irony: Blest indeed is the lot of a tragic play, for, to begin with, the spectators know the whole legend by the name it bears, and then, when the poet gets tired, he has only to lift the machine like his finger, and, hocus-pocus, all is ended; but in a comedy everything must be made from the beginning and explicitly set forth—persons, previous circumstances, plot, catastrophe, and episode—and if a jot or tittle is overlooked, Tom or Jerry in the pit will hiss us off the stage. The cathartic power of tragedy is described by Timocles [*Dionysiazusæ*, p. 614], in lines that sound like a common-sense version of Aristotle: Man is born to suffer, and there are many painful things in life; accordingly he has discovered consolation for his sad thoughts in tragedies, which lure the mind away to think of greater woes, and send the hearer soothed, and at the same time lessoned, home—the poor man, for example, finds that Telephus was still more poor, the sick man sees Alcmæon mad, the lame man pities Philoctetes and forgets himself; if one has lost a son, Niobe is enough to teach him resignation; and so on through all the calamities of life: gazing at sufferings worse than our own, we are forced to be contented.

Some of the most charming of the comic fragments are descriptions of sleep. A comedy, variously ascribed to Antiphanes and Alexis, bears the name of Sleep, and contains a dialogue [p. 570], of which the following is a version:

A. Not mortal, nor immortal, but of both
Blent in his being, so that gods nor men
Can claim him for their own; but ever fresh
He grows, and then dies off again to nothing,
Unseen by any, but well known to all.
B. Lady, you always charm me thus with riddles.
A. Yet what I say is clear and plain enough.
B. What boy is this that has so strange a nature?
A. Sleep, O my daughter, he that cures our ills.

Scarcely less delicate are the two following lines [pp. 749, 607]:

> ὅ τι προῖκα μόνον ἔδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ θεοὶ,
> τὸν ὕπνον,

and:

> ὕπνος τὰ μικρὰ τοῦ θανάτου μυστήρια.*

In this connection I may quote a beautiful fragment from Diphilus [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 5, p. 647] on Death and Sleep:

> There is no life without its share of evil,
> Griefs, persecutions, t rments, cares, diseases:
> Of these death comes to cure us, a physician
> Who gives heart's ease by filling us with slumber.

Before engaging in a group of fragments more illustrative of common Greek life, I will call attention to the examples of Attic slang furnished by Anaxandrides [*Odysseus*, fr. 2, p. 424]. To translate them into equivalent English would tax the ingenuity of Frere; but it is worth noticing that this *argot*, like that of our universities or public schools, is made up of the most miscellaneous material. Religious ritual, the theatre, personal peculiarities, the dust that is the plague of Athens, articles of dress, and current fables, all supply their quota. It is, in fact, the slang of cultivated social life.

Next to cooks, parasites, and fishwives, the *demi-monde* of Athens plays the most prominent part in comedy of the middle period.† The following couplet from a play of Philetærus [*Kunegis*, fr. 3, p. 477] might be chosen as a motto for an essay on this subject:

> οὐκ ἐτὸς ἑταίρας ἱερόν ἐστι πανταχοῦ,
> ἀλλ' οὐχὶ γαμετῆς οὐδαμοῦ τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

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* "The only free gift which the gods gave men,
To sleep."

"Sleep, that prepares our souls for endless night."

† The great subject of cooks I leave for discussion in relation to the New Comedy. See below, pp. 345–347.

This pithily expresses the pernicious relation in which the mistress, dignified by the name of companion, stood in Attic Hellas toward the married wife. The superiority of the former over the latter in popular appreciation is set forth with cynical directness by Amphis [*Athamas*, fr. 1, p. 480].

The Greeks had no sort of shame about intersexual relations; and of this perfect freedom of speech the comic poets furnish ample illustration in their dealing with the subject of adultery. There is not here the faintest trace of French romance. Sentiment of some kind is required to season the modern breaches of the seventh commandment. To the Greeks, who felt the minimum of romance in intersexual love, adultery appeared both dangerous and silly, when the laws of Solon had so well provided safety-valves for vice.* At the same time, the pages of the comic poets abound in violent invectives against licentious and avaricious women who were the ruin of young men. Anaxilas (*Neottis*, fr. 1, p. 501), in a voluble invective against "companions" of this sort, can find no language strong enough. They are serpents, fire-breathing chimæras, Charybdis and Scylla, sea-dogs, sphinxes, hydras, winged harpies, and so forth. Alexis describes the arts whereby they make the most of mean attractions, and suit their style to the current fashion [*Isostasion*, fr. 1, p. 537]. Epicrates paints the sordid old age of once-worshipped Lais in language that might serve as a classic pendent to Villon's *Regrets de la belle Héaulimiere* (*Antilaïs*, fr. 2, p. 510). In no point does the civilised society of great cities remain so constant as in the characteristics of Bohemian life. In this respect Athens seems to have been much the same as Venice in the sixteenth, and Paris in the nineteenth century.

What these playwrights say of love in general scarcely differs from the opinions already quoted from the tragic poets.

* The passages alluded to above are Eubulus [*Nannion*, fr. 1, p. 449], Xenarchus [*Pentathlos*, fr. 1, p. 624], and Philemon [*Adelphoi*, fr. 1].

Amphis [*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2, p. 482], and Alexis [*Helené*, p. 532; *Traumatias*, fr. 2, p. 569; *Phædrus*, fr. 1, p. 571; *Incert. Fab.* fr. 38, p. 582], may be referred to by the curious. It is worth while at this point to mention that some valuable illustrations of the later Attic comedy are to be drawn from the collectors of characteristics like Theophrastus, and from rhetoricians who condensed the matter of the comic drama in their prose. The dialogues of Lucian, the letters of Alciphron, the moral treatises of Plutarch and Maximus Tyrius, and the dissertations of Athenæus are especially valuable in this respect. Much that we have lost in its integrity is filtered for us through the medium of scholastic literature, performing for the middle comedy imperfectly that which Latin literature has done more completely for the new.

In dealing with the old comedy, one reference has been already made to cooks and cookery books. In the middle comedy they assume still more importance, and in the secondary authors of the new comedy they occupy the foreground of the picture, thanks to Athenæus. Cooks at Athens formed a class apart. They had their stations in the market, their schools, their libraries of culinary lore, their pedantries and pride, and special forms of knavery. The Roman custom of keeping slaves to cook at home, had not yet penetrated into Greece. If a man wanted to entertain his guests at a dinner-party, or to prepare a wedding feast, he had to seek the assistance of a professional *cordon bleu*, and the great *chef* ensconced himself for the day, with his subordinates, in the house of his employer. It is clear that these customs offered situations of rare comic humour to the playwright. Everybody had at some time felt the need of the professional cook, and everybody had suffered under him. In an age, moreover, which was nothing if it was not literary, the cooks caught the prevailing tone, and professed their art according to the rules of rhetoric.

εἰς τοὺς σοφιστὰς τὸν μάγειρον ἐγγράφω *

exclaims one of the characters of Alexis [*Milesia*, fr. 1, p. 551], after a scientific demonstration of the sin of letting sauces cool. A paterfamilias in a play of Strato [*Phœnikides*, p. 703] complains that he has brought a "male sphinx" in the shape of a cook into his house. The fellow will not condescend to use any but Homeric language, and the master is quite puzzled. It is in vain that he takes down the Homeric glossary of Philetas. Even this does not mend matters. The cook is a more recondite scholar than the grammarian. A professor of the culinary art in a play of Nicomachus [*Eilcithuia*, p. 717] explains to his employer the broad scientific basis upon which the art of cooking rests. Astrology, geometry, medicine, and natural history are all necessary. Another in Damoxenus [*Syntrophi*, p. 697] discusses various schools of philosophy from the culinary point of view. He begins by saying that he has spent four talents and nearly three years in the school of Epicurus, and has learned that a cook who has not mastered metaphysic is worthless. He must have Democritus and Epicurus at his fingers' ends, understand the elements of fire and water, comprehend the laws of harmony, and arrive at a profound contempt for Stoical self-discipline.† The study of cookery books employs as much time and demands as much enthusiasm as the study of the sages. A cook in Baton [*Euergetæ*, p. 685] shakes off sleep and trims the midnight oil that he may meditate the weighty precepts of his masters in the art.‡ Another in Euphron [*Adelphi*, p. 679] expounds the various virtues of his predecessors, and remarks that his own

* "Mid the philosophers I count the cook."

† Compare Sosipater [*Katapseudomenos*, p. 677] for a similar display of science; Euphron [*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1, p. 682], for a comparison of cooks with poets; Hegesippus [*Adelphi*, p. 676] for an egregious display of culinary tall-talk.

‡ Pollux mentions a list of celebrated authors on cookery.

peculiar merit consists in clever larceny. The same author makes a cook explain to his pupil the distinctions he ought to observe in catering for a club and for a wedding-party [*Synephebi*, p. 682]. One of the fragments of Menander turns, finally, upon the art of treating guests of different nationalities to different dishes [*Trophonius*, p. 46]. In this passage Menander seems to have had in mind some lines of Diphilus [*Apolipousa*, fr. 1, p. 633]. Another curious extract from the latter poet [*Zographus*, fr. 2, p. 638] consists of a long harangue delivered by a master cook to his *protégé*, a waiter, concerning the advantages and disadvantages of various houses into which he gains admittance by his art. A merchant just returned from sea, a spendthrift heir, and a leader of the *demi-monde* are good customers because of their prodigality. On the whole, the impression left upon our minds is that, what with democracy, all-pervading pedantry, and professional pride, high life below stairs in Athens was even more difficult to tolerate than it is in England.

To draw a firm line of demarcation between the middle and the new comedy would be impossible. I have already expressed my opinion that the comic drama culminated, within the limits determined for it by antique society, in the art of Menander. The modulations through which it passed before attaining to this final stage were numerous, and there are indications that the types invented for the middle comedy persisted in the new. What really created the third manner, and carried the comic art to its perfection, was the appearance of a truly original genius in the person of Menander. The playwrights who succeeded, could not fail to feel his influence, and plied their craft within the sphere he had traced.

Menander was the nephew of Alexis, the pupil of Theophrastus, the exact contemporary and intimate friend of Epicurus. From his uncle he received the traditions of dramatic art; from his master he learned the peripatetic method

of analysis; together with his friend he put in practice the philosophy of ἀταραξία which passes by the name of Epicureanism. His adequacy to the spirit of his own age can only be paralleled by that which we observe in Sophocles. As Sophocles exactly represents the period of Attic perfection, so the sadder and more sober years of disillusionment and premature decay find full expression in Menander. His personal beauty, the love of refined pleasure that distinguished him in life, the serene and genial temper of his wisdom, the polish of his verse, and the harmony of parts he observed in composition, justify us in calling Menander the Sophocles of comedy. Like Sophocles, he showed the originality of his genius by defining the limits of his art. He perfected the comic drama by restricting it more closely to real life. The love-tales—ἔρωτες καὶ παρθένων φθοραί—which Anaxandrides is said to have introduced, became the fixed material of the new comedy. Menander, however, used this subject-matter less for sensational effect or sentimental pathos than for the expression of a deep and tranquil wisdom. If we were to judge by the fragments transmitted to us, we should have to say that Menander's comedy was ethical philosophy in verse; so mature is their wisdom, so weighty their language, and so grave their tone. The brightness of the beautiful Greek spirit is sobered down in him almost to sadness. Middle age, with its maturity, has been substituted for youth with its passionate intensity. Taking Menander for our guide, we cannot cry: "You Greeks are always children." Yet the fact that Stobæus found him a fruitful source of sententious quotations, and that alphabetical anthologies were made of his proverbial sayings, ought not to obscure his fame for drollery and humour. The highest praise awarded by the Romans to Terence is contained in the apostrophe *dimidiate Menander;* and it appears that what the Latin critics thought their poet wanted, was the salt of Attic wit, the playful ease and lively sparkle of his

master. It is certain that well-constructed plots, profound analysis of character, refined humour, and ripe philosophy were blent and subordinated to the harmony of beauty by Menander. If old men appreciated his genial or pungent worldly wisdom, boys and girls read him, we are told, for his love-stories. One thing at least he never could have been—loud or vulgar. And for this reason, perhaps, we learn less from Menander about parasites and cooks than from his fellow dramatists.

Speaking broadly, the philosophy in vogue at Athens during the period of the new comedy was what in modern days is known as Epicureanism. This is proved by the frequent references made by playwrights to pleasure as the *summum bonum*,* as well as by their view of life in general. Yet it would be unjust to confound the grave and genial wisdom of Menander with so trivial a philosophy as that which may be summed up in the sentence "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." † A fragment from an unknown play of his expresses the pathos of human existence with a depth of feeling that is inconsistent with mere pleasure-seeking [p. 56]:

> When thou would'st know thyself, what man thou art,
> Look at the tombstones as thou passest by:
> Within those monuments lie bones and dust
> Of monarchs, tyrants, sages, men whose pride
> Rose high because of wealth, or noble blood,
> Or haughty soul, or loveliness of limb;
> Yet none of these things strove for them 'gainst time:
> One common death hath ta'en all mortal men.
> See thou to this, and know thee who thou art.

Such moralising sounds commonplace to us, who have been lessoned by the *memento mori* of the middle ages. Yet it

* See in particular Hegesippus [*Philitæri*, p. 676]; Baton [*Androphonus*, fr. 1, p. 684, and *Synaxaton*, fr. 1, p. 686], and Damoxenus [*Syntephi*, pp. 697, 698].

† The fragment from the Ἁλιεῖς, p. 3 of Didot's *Menander*, is clearly dramatic, and cannot be taken as an expression of the poet's mind.

should be remembered that, coming from a Greek of Menander's age, it claims originality of insight, and even now a ring of freshness as well as of truth marks its absolute sincerity. The following fragment [p. 58] again expresses Stoical, rather than Epicurean, philosophy of life:

> Being a man, ask not release from pain,
> But strength to bear pain, from the gods above;
> If thou wouldst fain escape all woe for aye,
> Thou must become god, or, if not, a corpse.

The exquisite lines in which the life of man is compared to a fair, wherefrom, when he has once seen the shows, he should be glad to pass away again in quiet, might be adduced to prove, if it were necessary, that Menander was no mere hedonist. To the same end might be quoted the passage upon destiny, which explains that chance and providence are only two names for one controlling power, face to face with which human forethought is but smoke and nonsense.* There is something even almost awful in the placid acquiescence of Menander. He has come to the end of passions and pleasures; he expects pain and is prepared to endure it; his happiness consists in tranquil contemplation of life, from which he no longer hopes for more than what Balzac calls the *à peu près* of felicity.† This tranquillity does not diminish but rather increases his power of enjoyment and the clearness of his vision. He combines the exact knowledge of the scientific analyst with judicial impartiality; and yet his worldly wisdom is not cold or dry. To make selections from fragments, every word whereof is golden, would be weary work; nor is it possible to preserve in translation the peculiar savour of this Attic salt. Menander should be spared this profanation. Before we leave him, let us remember what Goethe, a man as like Menander as a modern man can be, has said of him: "He is thoroughly pure, noble,

* These fragments are from the Ὑποβολίμαιος, pp. 48, 49.

† Compare Βοιωτία, fr. 2, p. 9; Μισογύνης, fr. 1, p. 32; Πλόκιον, fr. 8, p. 42.

great, and cheerful, and his grace is unattainable. It is to be lamented that we possess so little of him, but that little is invaluable."

The name of Philemon will always be coupled with that of Menander. In their lifetime they were competitors, and the Athenian audience preferred Philemon to his rival. Posterity in ancient days reversed this judgment—with justice, if our scanty fragments may be taken as sufficient basis for comparison. The lines in which Philemon praises peace as the Good vainly sought by sages, and declares that no painter or statuary can compete with truth, are fair examples of his fluent and at the same time polished style.* So are the comparison of men with animals to the disadvantage of the former, and the invective against Prometheus for dividing human nature into complex varieties of character.† Yet there is an element of sophistry in these examples, placing them below the pithy sayings of Menander. If I were to choose one fragment as illustrative of Philemon, and at the same time favourable to his reputation, it should be the following: ‡

> Have faith in God and fear; seek not to know him;
> For thou wilt gain nought else beyond thy search:
> Whether he is or is not, shun to ask:
> As one who is, and sees thee, always fear him.

The comedy of Menander determined the form of the drama in Rome, and, through the influence of Plautus and Terence upon the renascent culture of the sixteenth century, fixed the type of comedy in modern Europe. We are often struck, in reading his fragments, with their modern tone of thought and feeling. We recognise that here, as in the case of Molière, is a man who "chastised men by drawing them as they are," and that the men whom he chastised, the social follies he ridiculed, are among us at the present day. This

* Pp. 114, 115. † Pp. 118, 119.
‡ *Incert. fab.* fr. 26, p. 122. Cf. *ib.* fr. 86.

observation leads us to consider what we mean by modernism, when we say we find it in ancient literature. Sometimes the phrase is loosely used to indicate the permanent and invariable qualities of human nature emergent from local and temporary conditions. The Chorus in the *Agamemnon* upon the beautiful dead warriors in the Trojan war is called modern because it comes home directly to our own experience. Not their special mode of sepulture, or the lamentation of captive women over their heaped-up mounds, or the slaughter of human victims, or the trophies raised upon their graves, are touched upon. Such circumstances would dissociate them, if only accidentally, from our sympathies. It is the grief of those who stay at home and mourn, the pathos of youth and beauty wasted, that Æschylus has chosen for his threnos. This grief and this pathos are imperishable, and are therefore modern, inasmuch as they are not specifically ancient. Yet such use of the phrase is inaccurate. We come closer to the true meaning through the etymology of the word modern, derived perhaps from *modo*, or *just now;* so that what is modern, is, strictly speaking, that which belongs to the present moment. From this point of view modernism must continually be changing, for the moment now is in perpetual flux. Still, there is one characteristic of the now which comprehends the modern world, that does not and cannot alter: we are never free from the consciousness of a long past. *Nous vieillards nés d'hier* is essentially true of us; and to this characteristic may be referred what we mean to express by modernism. When nations have reached a certain growth and pitch of culture, certain sentiments, affectations, ways of thinking, modes of self-expression, habits of life, fashions, and the like, appear as the outcome of complex and long-established social conditions. Whatever may be the political groundwork of the national existence, the phase in question is sure to manifest itself, if only the nation lasts for a sufficient length of time. We, who

have assuredly arrived at the climacteric in question, when we recognise the signs of it elsewhere, call them modern; and nowhere can we find them more emphatically marked than in the age of Attic ripeness that produced Menander. "O Menander and life," said the grammarian of Alexandria, "which of you is the imitator of the other?" This apostrophe might also have been addressed to Homer; but what made it more specially applicable to Menander was that, while Homer invested the profound truths of passion and action with heroic dignity, Menander drew a no less faithful picture of human life together with the accidents of civilised and social circumstance. His delicate delineation of Attic society seemed nearer to the Alexandrian scholar, because it reproduced, not the remote conditions of the prehistoric age, but those which are common to periods of advanced culture. For a like reason he seems to us more obviously modern than Homer. He contemplates the drama of human life with eyes and mind not very differently trained from ours, and from a point of view close to ours. As a single instance, take this fragment. He is quietly laughing at the pompous and pretentious sages who said in Athens, as they say now, that a man must go into the wilderness to discover truth:

> εὑρετικὸν εἶναί φασι τὴν ἐρημίαν
> οἱ τὰς ὄφρυς αἴροντες.

We must not, however, be blinded by the modernism of Menander to the fact that ancient comedy differed in many most important respects from the comedy of modern Europe. If we only regard dramas of intrigue and manners, such as the *Mandragola* of Machiavelli, the *Volpone* of Ben Jonson, or the *Fourberies de Scapin* of Molière, we are indeed dealing with a type of comedy derived directly through the Latin from the Greek. But modern comedy does not remain within these narrow limits. Its highest products are either works of

pure creative fancy, like Shakspeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Fletcher's *Pilgrim*, or are so closely allied to tragedy, as in the case of Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and Molière's *Avare*, that only a nominal difference divides the two species. Nothing remains, either in fragments or in critical notices, to justify us in believing that the ancients developed either the serious comedy, essentially tragic in its ruthless revelation of a hell of evil passion, or the comedy of pure imagination. Their strict sense of the requirements of external form excluded the former kind of drama, while for the creation of the latter the free play of the romantic fancy was absolutely necessary. The total loss of Agathon, Chæremon, and other tragic poets of the post-Euripidean period, forces us to speak with reservation on this topic. There are many indications of a confusion of types at Athens during the fourth century B.C. analogous to that which characterises modern dramatic poetry. Yet it may be asserted with tolerable confidence that, while the Greeks understood by comedy a form of art that aimed at exciting mirth and was confined within the limits of domestic life, modern comedy has not unfrequently in her higher flights excited the passions of terror and pity, and has quitted the region of diurnal prose for the dream-world of fairyland. An ancient critic would have probably observed that Molière's *Avare* was too seriously sinister to be rightly called comic, and that the absence of parody or burlesque in Shakspeare's *Tempest* excluded that play from comparison with the *Birds* of Aristophanes. Here, then, as elsewhere, we have to notice the greater freedom demanded by the modern fancy in dealing with the forms of art, together with the absence of those firmly-traced critical canons to which the antique genius willingly submitted. Modern art in general, when it is not directly and consciously imitative of antique models, demands a more complete liberation of the spiritual element. We cannot avoid *les défauts de nos qualités*. This

superior freedom involves a bewildering complexity and intermixture of the serious and the ludicrous, the lyrical and the dramatic, the positive and the fanciful, defying classification, and in its very caprice approximating to the realities of existence.

CHAPTER XI.

HERO AND LEANDER.

Virgil's Mention of this Tale.—Ovid and Statius.—Autumnal Poetry.—Confusion between the Mythical Musæus and the Grammarian.—The Introduction of the Poem.—Analysis of the Story.—Hallam's Judgment on Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.—Comparison of Marlowe and Musæus.—Classic and Romantic Art.

> Quid juvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem
> Durus amor? Nempe abruptis turbata procellis
> Nocte natat cæca serus freta; quem super ingens
> Porta tonat cæli, et scopulis inlisa reclamant
> Æquora; nec miseri possunt revocare parentes,
> Nec moritura super crudeli funere virgo.*

THIS is the first allusion to a story, rather Roman than Greek, which was destined to play an important part in literature. The introduction of the fable without names into a poem like the third Georgic shows, however, that the pathetic tale of Hero and Leander's love had already found familiar representation in song or sculpture or wall-painting before Virgil touched it with the genius that turned all it touched to gold. Ovid went further, and placed the maiden of Sestos among the heroines for whom he wrote rhetorical epistles in elegiac verse.

* "What of the youth, whose marrow the fierceness of Love has turned to flame? Late in the dark night he swims o'er seas boiling with burst ng storms; and over his head the huge gates of the sky thunder; and the seas, dashing on the rocks, call to him to return: nor can the thought of his parents' agony entice him back, nor of the maiden doomed to a cruel death upon his corpse."—Virg. *Georg.* iii. 258. Translated by an Oxford Graduate.

In Statius, again, we get a glimpse of the story translated from the sphere of romance into the region of antique mythology. To the hero Admetus Adrastus gives a mantle dyed with Tyrian purple, and embroidered with Leander's death. There flows the Hellespont; the youth is vainly struggling with the swollen waves; and there stands Hero on her tower; and the lamp already flickers in the blast that will destroy both light and lives at once. It still remained for a grammarian of the fifth century, Musæus, of whom nothing but the name is known, to give the final form to this poem of love and death. The spring-tide of the epic and the idyll was over. When Musæus entered the Heliconian meadows to pluck this last pure rose of Greek summer, autumn had already set its silent finger on "bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang." His little poem of three hundred and forty hexameters is both an epic and an idyll. While maintaining the old heroic style of narrative by means of repeated lines, it recalls the sweetness of Theocritus in studied descriptions, dactylic cadences, and brief reflective sayings, that reveal the poet's mind. Like some engraved gems, the latest products of the glyphic art, this poem adjusts the breadth of the grand manner to the small scale required by jewellery, treating a full subject in a narrow space, and in return endowing slight motives with dignity by nobleness of handling.

Calm mornings of sunshine visit us at times in early November, appearing like glimpses of departed spring amid the wilderness of wet and windy days that lead to winter. It is pleasant, when these interludes of silvery light occur, to ride into the woods and see how wonderful are all the colours of decay. Overhead, the elms and chestnuts hang their wealth of golden leaves, while the beeches darken into russet tones, and the wild cherry glows like blood-red wine. In the hedges crimson haws and scarlet hips are wreathed with hoary clematis or necklaces of coral briony berries; the

brambles burn with many coloured flames; the dog-wood is bronzed with purple; and here and there the spindle-wood puts forth its fruit, like knots of rosy buds, on delicate frail twigs. Underneath lie fallen leaves, and the brown brake rises to our knees as we thread the forest paths. Everything is beautiful with beauty born of over-ripeness and decline. Green summer comes no more this year, at any rate. In front are death and bareness and the winter's frost.

Such a day of sunlight in the November of Greek poetry is granted to us by *Hero and Leander*. The grace of the poem is soul-compelling—indescribable for sweetness. Yet every epithet, each requisite conceit, and all the studied phrases that yield charm, remind us that the end has come. There is peculiar pathos in this autumnal loveliness of literature upon the wane. In order to appreciate it fully, we must compare the mellow tints of Musæus with the morning glory of Homer or of Pindar. We then find that, in spite of so much loss, in spite of warmth and full light taken from us, and promise of the future exchanged for musings on the past, a type of beauty unattainable by happier poets of the spring has been revealed. Not to accept this grace with thanksgiving, because, forsooth, December, that takes all away, is close at hand, would be ungrateful.*

Yet, though clearly perceptible by the æsthetic sense, it is far less easy to define its quality than to miss it altogether.

* It is not only in Musæus that we trace a fascination comparable to that of autumn tints in trees. The description by Ausonius of Love caught and crucified in the garden of Proserpine, which contains the two following lines;

> Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
> Et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos:

might be quoted as an instance of the charm. Indeed, it pervades the best Latin poetry of the silver age, the Epistles of Philostratus, many of the later Greek epigrams, and all the Greek romances, with *Daphnis and Chloe* at their head.

We do not gain much, for example, by pointing to the reminiscences of bygone phraseology curiously blended with new forms of language, to the artificial subtleties of rhythm wrung from well-worn metres, to the richness of effect produced by conscious use of telling images, to the iridescent shimmer of mixed metaphors, compound epithets, and daring tropes, contrasted with the undertone of sadness which betrays the "idle singer of an empty day," although these elements are all combined in the autumnal style. Nor will it profit us to distinguish this kind of beauty from the *beauté maladive* of morbid art. So difficult, indeed, is it to seize its character with any certainty, that in the case of *Hero and Leander* the uncritical scholars of the Greek Renaissance mistook the evening for the morning star of Greek poetry, confounding Musæus the grammarian with the semi mythic bard of the Orphean age. When Aldus Manutius conceived his great idea of issuing Greek literature entire from the Venetian press, he put forth *Hero and Leander* first of all in 1498, with a preface that ran as follows:—"I was desirous that Musæus, the most ancient poet, should form a prelude to Aristotle and the other sages who will shortly be imprinted at my hands." Marlowe spoke of "divine Musæus," and even the elder Scaliger saw no reason to suspect that the grammarian's studied verse was not the first clear wood-note of the Eleusinian singer. What renders this mistake pardonable is the fact that, however autumnal may be the poem's charm, no point of the genuine Greek youthfulness of fancy has been lost. Through conceits, confusions of diction, and over-sweetness of style, emerges the clear outline which characterised Greek art in all its periods. Both persons and situations are plastically treated—subjected, that is to say, to the conditions best fulfilled by sculpture. The emotional element is adequate to the imaginative presentation; the feeling penetrates the form and gives it life, without exceeding the just limits which the form imposes. The importance of this observation

will appear when we examine the same poem romantically handled by our own Marlowe. If nothing but the *Hero and Leander* of Musæus had survived the ruin of Greek literature, we should still be able to distinguish how Greek poets dealt with their material, and to point the difference between the classic and the modern styles.

What is truly admirable in this poem, marking it as genuinely Greek, is the simplicity of structure, clearness of motives, and unaffected purity of natural feeling. The first fifteen lines set forth, by way of proem, the whole subject:—

> εἰπὲ, θεὰ, κρυφίων ἐπιμάρτυρα λύχνον ἐρώτων,
> καὶ νύχιον πλωτῆρα θαλασσοπόρων ὑμεναίων,
> καὶ γάμον ἀχλυόεντα, τὸν οὐκ ἴδεν ἄφθιτος Ἠώς,
> καὶ Σηστὸν καὶ Ἄβυδον ὅπη γάμος ἔννυχος Ἡροῦς.*

Here, perhaps, a modern poet might have stayed his hand: not so Musæus; he has still to say that he will tell of Leander's death, and, in propounding this part of the theme, to speak once more about the lamp:—

> λύχνον, ἔρωτος ἄγαλμα, τὸν ὤφελεν αἰθέριος Ζεὺς
> ἐννύχιον μετ' ἄεθλον ἄγειν ἐς ὁμήγυριν ἄστρων
> καί μιν ἐπικλῆσαι νυμφοστόλον ἄστρον ἐρώτων.†

Seven lines were enough for Homer while explaining the subject of the *Iliad*. Musæus, though his poem is so short, wants more than twice as many. He cannot resist the temptation to introduce decorative passages like the three lines just quoted, which are, moreover, appropriate in a poem that aims at combining the idyllic styles.

After the proem we enter on the story. Sestos and Abydos

* "Tell, goddess, of the lamp, the confidant of secret love, and of the youth who swam by night to find his bridal-bed beyond the sea, and of the darkened marriage on which immortal morning never shone, and of Sestos and Abydos, where was the midnight wedding of Hero."

† "Love's ornament, which Zeus in heaven, after the midnight contest, should have brought into the company of stars, and called it the bride-adorning star of love."

are divided by the sea, but Love has joined them with an arrow from his bow :—

> ἠΐθεον φλέξας καὶ παρθένον· οὔνομα δ' αὐτῶν
> ἰμερόεις τε Λέανδρος ἔην καὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ.*

Hero dwelt at Sestos ; Leander lived at Abydos ; and both were "exceeding fair stars of the two cities." By the sea, outside the town of Sestos, Hero had a tower, where she abode in solitude with one old servant, paying her daily orisons to Dame Kupris, whose maiden votary she was, and sprinkling the altars of Love with incense to propitiate his powerful deity. "Still even thus she did not shun his fire-breathing shafts ;" for so it happened that when the festival of Adonis came round, and the women flocked into the town to worship, and the youths to gaze upon the maidens, Hero passed forth that day to Venus' temple, and all the men beheld her beauty, and praised her for a goddess, and desired her for a bride. Leander, too, was there ; and Leander could not content himself, like the rest, with distant admiration :—

> εἶλε δέ μιν τότε θάμβος, ἀναιδείη, τρόμος, αἰδώς·
> ἔτρεμε μὲν κραδίην, αἰδὼς δὲ μιν εἶχεν ἀλῶναι·
> θάμβεε δ' εἶδος ἄριστον, ἔρως δ' ἀπενόσφισεν αἰδώ·
> θαρσαλέως δ' ὑπ' ἔρωτος ἀναιδείην ἀγαπάζων
> ἠρέμα ποσσὶν ἔβαινε καὶ ἀντίον ἵστατο κούρης.†

He met the maiden face to face, and his eyes betrayed his passion ; and she too felt the power of love in secret, and repelled him not, but by her silence and tranquillity encouraged him to hope :—

* "By setting on fire a youth and a maiden, of whom the names were love-inspiring Leander and virgin Hero."

† "Then came upon him astonishment, audacity, trembling, shame ; in his heart he trembled, and shame seized him at having been made captive : yet he marvelled at the faultless form, and love kept shame away ; then manfully by love's guidance he embraced audacity, and gently stepped and stood before the girl."

ὁ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἰάνθη,
ὅττι πύθον συνέηκε καὶ οὐκ ἀπεσείσατο κούρη.*

So far one hundred and nine lines of the poem have carried us. The following one hundred and eleven lines, nearly a third of the whole, are devoted to the scene in the temple between Hero and her lover. This forms by far the most beautiful section of the tale; for the attention is concentrated on the boy and girl between whom love at first sight has just been born. In the twilight of early evening, in the recesses of the shrine, they stand together, like fair forms carved upon a bas-relief. Leander pleads and Hero listens. The man's wooing, the maiden's shrinking; his passionate insistance, her gradual yielding; are described in a series of exquisite and artful scenes, wherein the truth of a natural situation is enhanced by rare and curious touches. With genuine Greek instinct the poet has throughout been mindful to present both lovers clearly to the eye, so that a succession of pictures support and illustrate the dialogue, which rises at the climax to a love-duet. The descriptive lines are very simple, like these :—

ἠρέμα μὲν θλίβων ῥοδοειδέα δάκτυλα κούρης
βυσσόθεν ἐστονάχιζεν ἀθέσφατον. ἡ δὲ σιωπῇ,
οἷά τε χωομένη, ῥοδέην ἐξέσπασε χεῖρα.†

Or again :—

παρθενικῆς δ' εὔοδμον ἐΰχροον αὐχένα κύσας.‡

Or yet again :—

ὄφρα μὲν οὖν ποτὶ γαῖαν ἔχεν νεύουσαν ὀπωπήν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ Λείανδρος ἐρωμανέεσσι προσώποις
οὐ κάμεν εἰσορόων ἀπαλόχροον αὐχένα κούρης.§

* "And he within himself was glad at heart, because the maiden understood his love, and cast it not from her."

† "Gently pressing the rosy fingers of the maiden, from the depths of his breast he sighed; but she, in silence, as though angered, drew her rosy hand away."

‡ "Kissing the fair perfumed maiden's neck."

§ "The while she bent her glance upon the ground, Leander tired not with impassioned eyes of gazing at the maiden's neck."

We do not want more than this: it is enough to animate the plastic figures presented to our fancy. Meanwhile Hero cannot resist the pleadings of Leander, and her yielding is described with beautiful avoidance of superfluous sentiment:—

> ἤδη καὶ γλυκύπικρον ἐδέξατο κέντρον ἐρώτων,
> θέρμετο δὲ κραδίην γλυκερῷ πυρὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ
> κάλλεϊ δ' ἱμερόεντος ἀνεπτοίητο Λεάνδρου.*

A modern poet would have sought to spiritualise the situation: in the hands of the Greek artist it remains quite natural; it is the beauty of Leander that persuades and subdues Hero to love, and the agitations of her soul are expressed in language which suggests a power that comes upon her from without. At the same time there is no suspicion of levity or sensuality. Hero cannot be mistaken for a light of love. When the times comes, she will break her heart upon the dead body of the youth who wins her by his passion and his beauty. Leander has hitherto been only anxious to possess her for his own. Hero, as soon as she perceives that he has won the fight, bethinks her with a woman's wisdom of ways and means. Who is the strange man to whom she must abandon herself in wedlock; and what does he know about her; and how can they meet? Therefore she tells him her name and describes her dwelling:—

> πύργος δ' ἀμφιβόητος ἐμὸς δόμος οὐρανομήκης
> ᾧ ἔνι ναιετάουσα σὺν ἀμφιπόλῳ τινὶ μούνῃ
> Σηστιάδος πρὸ πόληος ὑπὲρ βαθυκύμονας ὄχθας
> γείτονα πόντον ἔχω στυγεραῖς βουλῇσι τοκήων.
> οὐδέ μοι ἐγγὺς ἔασιν ὁμήλικες, οὐδὲ χορεῖαι
> ἠϊθέων παρέασιν· ἀεὶ δ' ἀνὰ νύκτα καὶ ἠῶ
> ἐξ ἁλὸς ἠνεμοέντος ἐπιβρέμει οὔασιν ἠχή.†

* "Now she, too, received into her soul the bitter-sweet sting of love, and the heart of maiden Hero was warmed with delicious fire, and before the beauty of love-inspiring Leander she quailed."

† "A tower, beset with noises of the sea, and high as heaven, is my home: there I dwell, together with one only servant, before the city-walls

Having said so much, shame overtakes her; she hides her face, and blames her over-hasty tongue. But Leander, pondering how he shall win the stakes of love proposed to him—*πῶς κεν ἔρωτος ἀεθλεύσειεν ἀγῶνα*—is helped at last by Love himself, the wounder and the healer of the heart in one. He bursts into a passionate protestation: "Maiden, for the love of thee I will cross the stormy waves; yea, though the waters blaze with fire, and the sea be unsailed by ships. Only do thou light a lamp upon thy tower to guide me through the gloom:—

ὄφρα νοήσας
*ἔσσομαι ὁλκὰς Ἔρωτος ἔχων σέθεν ἀστέρα λύχνον.**

Seeing its spark, I shall not need the north star or Orion. And now, if thou wouldst have my name, know that I am Leander, husband of the fair-crowned Hero."

Nothing now remains for the lovers but to arrange the signs and seasons of their future meeting. Then Hero retires to her tower, and Leander returns to Abydos by the Hellespont:—

παννυχίων δ' ὀάρων κρυφίους ποθέοντες ἀέθλους
πολλάκις ἠρήσαντο μολεῖν θαλαμηπόλον ὄρφνην.†

It may be said in passing that this parting-scene, though briefly narrated, is no less well conducted, *wohl motivirt*, as Goethe would have phrased it, than are all the other incidents of the poem (lines 221–231). The interpretation of the passage turns upon the word *παννυχίδας*, in line 225, which must here be taken to mean the vigil before marriage.

At this point the action turns. Musæus, having to work

of Sestos, above the deep-waved shore, with ocean for my neighbour: such is the stern will of my parents. Nor are there maidens of my age to keep me company, nor dances of young men close by; but everlastingly at night and morn a roaring from the windy sea assails my ears."

* "Minding it, I shall be a ship of love, having thy lamp for star."

† "In their desire for the hidden lists of midnight converse, they oftentimes prayed that darkness should descend and lead them to the bridal-bed."

within a narrow space, has made the meeting and the dialogue between the lovers disproportionate to the length of the whole piece. In this way he secures our sympathy for the youth and maid, whom we learn to know as living persons. He can now afford to drop superfluous links, and to compress the tale within strict limits. The cunning of his art is shown by the boldness of the transition to the next important incident. The night and the day are supposed to have passed. We hear nothing of the impatience of Leander or of Hero's flux and reflux of contending feelings. The narrative is resumed just as though the old thread had been broken, and another had been spun; and yet there is no sense of interruption:—

> ἤδη κυανόπεπλος ἀνέδραμε νυκτὸς ὁμίχλη
> ἀνδράσιν ὕπνον ἄγουσα καὶ οὐ ποθέοντι Λεάνδρῳ.*

The lover's attitude of suspense, waiting at nightfall on the beach for Hero's lamp to burn, is so strongly emphasised in the following lines that we are made to feel how anxiously and yearningly the hours of daylight had been spent by him. No sooner does the spark shine forth than Leander darts forward to the waves, and, having prayed to Love, leaps lively in:—

> ὣς εἰπὼν μελέων ἐρατῶν ἀπεδύσατο πέπλον
> ἀμφοτέραις παλάμῃσιν, ἑῷ δ' ἔσφιγξε καρήνῳ,
> ἠϊόνος δ' ἐξῶρτο, δέμας δ' ἐμβάψε θαλάσσῃ,
> λαμπομένου δ' ἔσπευδεν ἀεὶ κατεναντία λύχνου
> αὐτὸς ἐὼν ἐρέτης αὐτόστολος αὐτόματος νῆυς.†

Hero meanwhile is on the watch, and when her bridegroom gains the shore, breathless and panting, he finds himself within her arms:—

* "Now the dark-mantled gloom of night rose over earth, bringing to mortals sleep, but not to longing Leander."

† "So having said, he withdrew from his lovely limbs the mantle with both hands, and bound it on his head, and leapt from the shore, and cast his body on the sea, and ever fared face-forward to the burning lamp, himself the oarsman, self-impelled, a self-directed ship."

ἐκ δὲ θυράων
νυμφίον ἀσθμαίνοντα περιπτύξασα σιωπῇ
ἀφροκόμους ῥαθάμιγγας ἔτι στάζοντα θαλάσσης
ἦγαγε νυμφοκόμοιο μυχοὺς ἐπὶ παρθενεῶνος.*

There she washes the stain and saltness of the sea from his body, and anoints him with perfumed oil, and leads him with tender words of welcome to the marriage-bed. The classic poet feels no need of apologising for the situation, nor does he care to emphasise it. The whole is narrated with Homeric directness, contrasting curiously with the romantic handling of the same incident by Marlowe. Yet the point and pathos of clandestine marriage had to be expressed; and to a Greek the characteristic circumstance was the absence of customary ritual. This defect, while it isolated the lovers from domestic sympathies and troops of friends, attracted attention to themselves, and gave occasion to some of the best verses in the poem :—

ἦν γάμος ἀλλ' ἀχόρευτος· ἦην λέχος ἀλλ' ἄτερ ὕμνων·
οὐ Ζυγίην Ἥρην τις ἐπευφήμησεν ἀοιδος·
οὐ δαΐδων ἥπτραπτε σέλας θαλαμηπόλον εὐνήν·
οὐδὲ πολυσκάρθμῳ τις ἐπεσκίρτησε χορείᾳ,
οὐχ ὑμέναιον ἄεισε πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ·
ἀλλὰ λέχος στορέσασα τελεσσιγάμοισιν ἐν ὥραις
σιγὴ παστὸν ἔπηξεν, ἐνυμφοκόμησε δ' ὁμίχλη,
καὶ γάμος ἦν ἀπάνευθεν ἀειδομένων ὑπεμαίων.
νὺξ μὲν ἦην κείνοισι γαμοστόλος, οὐδέ ποτ' ἠὼς
νύμφιον εἶδε Λεάνδρον ἀριγνώτοις ἐνὶ λέκτροις·
νήχετο δ' ἀντιπόροιο πάλιν ποτὶ δῆμον Ἀβύδου
ἐννιχίων ἀκόρητος ἔτι πνείων ὑ ιεναίων.
Ἥρῳ δ' ἑλκεσίπεπλος, ἑοὺς λήθουσα τοκῆας,
παρθένος ἠματίη νυχίη γυνή. Ἀμφότεροι δὲ
πολλάκις ἠρήσαντο κατελθέμεν ἐς δύσιν ἠώ.†

* "From the door she passed, and silently embraced her panting bridegroom, dripping with the foamy sprinklings of the sea, and led him to the bride-adorning chamber of her maiden hours."

† "There was wedding, but without the ball; there was bedding but without the hymn : no singer invoked bridal Hera ; no blaze of torches lit

So the night passed, and through many summer nights they tasted the sweets of love, χλοερσῖσιν ἰαινόμενοι μελέεσσιν. But soon came winter, and with winter the sea grew stormy, and ships were drawn up on the beach, and the winds battled with each other in the Hellespontine Straits; and now Hero should have refrained from lighting her lamp, μινυώριον ἀστέρα λέκτρων: but love and fate compelled her, and the night of tempest and of destiny arrived. Manfully Leander wrestled with the waves; yet the storm grew stronger; his strength ebbed away; an envious gust blew out the guiding lamp; and so he perished in the waters. The picture of his death-struggle is painted with brief incisive touches. The last two lines have a strange unconscious pathos in them, as though the life and love of a man were no better than a candle:—

καὶ δὴ λύχνον ἄπιστον ἀπέσβεσε πικρὸς ἀήτης
*καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ ἔρωτα πολυτλήτοιο Λεάνδρου.**

What remains to be told is but little. The cold grey dawn went forth upon the sea; how grey and comfortless they know who, after lonely watching through night hours, have seen discoloured breakers beat upon a rainy shore. Hero from her turret gazed through the twilight; and there at her feet lay dead Leander, bruised by the rocks and buffeted by slapping waves. She uttered no cry; but tore the embroidered raiment on her breast, and flung herself, face-downward, from the lofty

the nuptial couch, nor did the youths and maidens move in myriad mazes of the dance: father and mother sang no marriage chant. But silence spread the bed and strewed the couch, and darkness decked the bride; without hymns of Hymen was the wedding. Night was their bridesmaid, nor did dawning see Leander in the husband's room. He swam again across the straits to Abydos, still breathing of bridal in his soul unsatisfied of joy. Hero, meanwhile, by day a maid, at night a wife, escaped her parents' eyes: both bride and bridegroom oftentimes desired that day should set."

* "And so the bitter blast extinguished the faithless lamp and the life and love of suffering Leander."

tower. In their death, says the poet after his own fashion, they were not divided :—

ἀλλήλων δ' ἀπόναντο καὶ ἐν πυμάτῳ περ ὀλέθῳ.*

This line ends the poem.

This is but a simple story. Yet for that very reason it is one of those stories which can never grow old. As Leigh Hunt, after some unnecessary girding at scholars and sculptors, has sung :—

I never think of poor Leander's fate,
And how he swam, and how his bride sat late,
And watched the dreadful dawning of the light,
But as I would of two that died last night.
So might they now have lived, and so have died ;
The story's heart, to me, still beats against its side.

What makes it doubly touching is, that this poem of young love and untimely fate was born, like a soul "beneath the ribs of death," in the dotage and decay of Greek art. I do not know whether it has often been noticed that the qualities of romantic grace and pathos were chiefly appreciated by the Greeks in their decline. It is this circumstance, perhaps, which caused the tales of *Hero and Leander* and *Daphnis and Chloe* to attract so much attention at the time of the Renaissance. Modern students found something akin to their own modes of feeling in the later classics. Are not the colours of the autumn in harmony with the tints of spring?

The judicious Hallam, in a famous passage of the History of Literature, records his opinion that "it is impossible not to wish that Shakspeare had never written" the Sonnets dedicated to Mr. W. H. With the same astounding ἀπειροκαλία, or insensibility to beauty, he ventures to dismiss the *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe as "a paraphrase, in every sense of the epithet, of the most licentious kind." Yet this severe high-

* "They enjoyed each other even thus in the last straits of doom."

priest of decorum has devoted three pages and a half to the analysis of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which play we have, as he remarks with justice, "more than in any other tragedy, the mere passion of love; love, in all its vernal promise, full of hope and innocence, ardent beyond all restraint of reason, but tender as it is warm." What can be said of the critical perceptions of one who finds so strongly marked a moral separation between the motives of Marlowe's poem and Shakspeare's play?

The truth is that the words used by Hallam to characterise the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* are almost exactly applicable to *Hero and Leander*, after due allowance made for the distinction between the styles of presentation proper to a tragedy in the one case, and in the other to a narrative poem. Reflecting upon this, it is probable that the impartial student will side with Swinburne when he writes: "I must avow that I want and am well content to want the sense, whatever it be, which would enable me to discern more offence in that lovely picture of the union of two lovers in body as in soul than I can discern in the parting of Romeo and Juliet."

To discuss the morality of Marlowe's Muse is, however, alien to the present purpose. What has to be brought plainly forward is the artistic difference between the methods of Marlowe and Musæus. Hallam in calling the English *Hero and Leander* a "paraphrase" was hardly less wrong than Warton, who called it a "translation." It is in fact a free and independent reproduction of the story first told by Musæus. Without the poem of Musæus the poem of Marlowe would not have existed; but though the incidents remain unchanged, the whole manner of presenting them, of selecting characteristic details, and of guiding the sympathy and imagination of the reader is altered. In other words, the artistic consciousness had shifted its point of gravity between the ages of Musæus and Marlowe, and a new poem was produced to satisfy the

new requirements of the æsthetic ideal. Musæus, as we have already seen, thought it essential to set forth the whole of his subject at the opening in its minutest details: Sestos and Abydos, the marriage-bed on which the morning never shone, the swimming feat of Leander, and the lamp, which was the star of love, till envious fate blew out both love and light and life itself together, all find their proper place in the proemium. In conducting the narrative he is careful to present each motive, as it were, from the outside, to cast the light of his imagination upon forms rendered as distinct as possible in their plasticity, just as the sun's light falls upon and renders visible a statue. There is no attempt to spiritualise the subject, to flood it with emotion, thought, and passion, to pierce into its inmost substance, to find the analogue to its implicit feeling in the depth of his own soul, and, by expressing that, to place his readers at the point of view from which he contemplates the beauty of the fable. The poet withdraws his personality, leaving the animated figures he has put upon the stage of fancy, the carefully-prepared situations that display their activity, and the words invented for them, to tell the tale. He can therefore afford to be both simple and direct, brief in descriptive passages, and free from psychological digressions. A few gnomic sentences, here and there introduced, suffice to maintain the reflective character of a meditated work of art. All this is in perfect concord with the Greek conception of art, the sculpturesque ideal.

Marlowe takes another course. The three hundred and forty lines, which were enough for Musæus, are expanded into six sestiads or cantos, each longer than the whole Greek poem.* Yet to this lengthy narrative no prelude is prefixed. Unlike Musæus, Marlowe rushes at once into the story. He does not wait to propound it, or to talk about the

* Marlowe lived to write only the two first sestiads.

fatal lamp, or to describe Hero's tower. That Hero lived in a tower at all, we only discover by accident on the occasion of her visit to the shrine of Venus, and Leander makes his first appearance there, guided by no lamp, but by his own audacity. On the other hand, all descriptions that set free the poet's feeling, are enormously extended. The one epithet ἱμερόεις, or love-inspiring, for instance, which satisfied Musæus, is amplified by Marlowe through forty lines throbbing with his own deep sense of adolescent beauty. The temple of Venus, briefly alluded to by Musæus, is painted in detail by Marlowe, with a luminous account of its frescoes, bas-reliefs, and pavements. The first impassioned speech of Leander runs at one breath over ninety-six verses, while mythological episodes and moral reflections are freely interpolated. All the situations, however delicate, so long as they have raised the poet's sense of beauty to enthusiasm, are treated with elaborate and loving sympathy. In presenting them with their fulness of emotion to the reader, Marlowe taxes his inexhaustible invention to the utmost, and permits the luxuriance of his fancy to run riot. The passion which carries this soul of fire and air up to the empyrean, where it moves at ease, sometimes betrays him into what we know as faults of taste. It is as though the love-ache, grown intense, had passed over for a moment into pain, as though the music, seeking for subtler and still more subtle harmonies, had touched at times on discord.

Compared with the Greek poem, this *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe is like some radiant double rose placed side by side with the wild briar whence it sprang by cultivation. The petals have been multiplied, the perfume deepened and intensified, the colours varied in their modulations of a single tint. At the same time something in point of simple form has been sacrificed. The first thing, then, that strikes us in turning from Musæus to Marlowe is that what the Greek poet

considered all-important in the presentation of his subject, has been dropped or negligently handled by the English, while the English poet has been prodigal in places where the Greek displayed his parsimony. On looking further, we discover that the modern poet, in all these differences, aims at effects not realised by ancient art. The life and play and actual pulsations of emotion have to be revealed, both as they exist in the subject of the poem and as the poet finds them in his own soul. Everything that will contribute to this main achievement is welcomed by the poet, and the rest rejected. All the motives which had an external statuesque significance for the Greek must palpitate with passion for the English. Those that cannot clothe themselves with spirit as with a garment are abandoned. He wants to make his readers feel, not see: if they see at all, they must see through their emotion; whereas the emotion of the Greek was stirred in him through sight. We do not get very far into the matter, but we gain something, perhaps, by adding that, as sculpture is to painting and music, so is the poetry of Musæus to that of Marlowe. In the former feeling is subordinate or at most but adequate to form: in the latter, *Gefühl ist alles.*

What has just been advanced is stated broadly, and is therefore only accurate in a general sense. For while the Greek *Leander* contains exquisite touches of pure sentiment, so the English *Leander* offers fully perfected pictures of Titianesque beauty. Still, this does not impair the strength of the position: what is really instructive in the comparative study of the two tales of *Hero and Leander* will always be that the elder poem, in spite of its autumnal quality, is classical, the younger, in spite of its most utter Paganism, is romantic. To enter into minute criticism of Marlowe's poem would be out of place here; and, were it included in my programme, I should shrink from this task as a kind of profanation. Those who have the true sense of ideal beauty, and who can rise by

sympathy above the commonplaces of everyday life, into the free atmosphere of art, which is nature permeated with emotion, will never forget the prolonged, recurring, complex cadences of that divinest dithyramb poured forth from a young man's soul. Every form and kind of beauty is included in his adoration, and the whole is spiritualised with imagination, ardent and passionate beyond all words.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Sculpture the Greek Art *par excellence.*—Plastic Character of the Greek Genius.—Sterner Aspects of Greek Art.—Subordination of Pain and Discord to Harmony.—Stoic-Epicurean Acceptance of Life.—Sadness of Achilles in the *Odyssey.*—Endurance of Odysseus.—Myth of Prometheus.—Sir H. S. Maine on Progress.—The Essential Relation of all Spiritual Movement to Greek Culture.—Value of the Moral Attitude of the Greeks for us.—Three Points of Greek Ethical Inferiority.—The Conception of Nature.—The System of Marcus Aurelius.—Contrast with the *Imitatio Christi.*—The Modern Scientific Spirit.—Indestructible Elements in the Philosophy of Nature.

I MAY, perhaps, be allowed in this last chapter to quit the impersonal style of the Essayist and to refer to some strictures passed upon the earlier series of my studies of Greek Poets. Critics, for whose opinion I feel respect, have observed that, in what I wrote about the genius of Greek Art at the end of that volume, I neglected to notice the sterner and more serious qualities of the Greek spirit, that I exaggerated the importance of sculpture as the characteristic Hellenic art, and that I did not make my meaning clear about the value of the study of Greek modes of thought and feeling for men living in our scientific age. To take up these topics in detail, and to answer some of these indictments, is my purpose in the present chapter. They are so varied that I may fairly be excused for adopting a less methodical and connected development of ideas than ought to be demanded from a man who is not answering objections, but preferring opinions.

To take the least important of these questions first: why is sculpture selected as the most eminent and characteristic art of the Hellenic race, when so much remains of their poetry, and of prose work in the highest sense artistic? To my mind the answer is simple enough. One modern nation has produced a drama which can compete with that of Athens. Another has carried painting to a perfection we have little reason to believe it ever reached in Greece. A third has satisfied the deepest and the widest needs of our emotional nature, by such music as no Greek, in all probability, had any opportunity of hearing. In the last place, Gothic architecture, the common heritage of all the European nations of the modern world, is at least as noble as the architecture of the ancients. The Greeks alone have been unique in sculpture: what survives of Pheidias and Praxiteles, of Polycletus and Scopas, and of their schools, transcends in beauty and in power, in freedom of handling and in purity of form, the very highest work of Donatello, Della Quercia, and Michael Angelo. We have, therefore, a *primâ facie* right to lay great stress on sculpture as a Greek art, just as we have the *primâ facie* right to select painting as an Italian art. The first step taken from this position leads to the reflection that, within the sphere of art at any rate, the one art which a nation has developed as its own, to which it has succeeded in giving unique perfection, and upon which it has impressed the mark of its peculiar character, will lend the key for the interpretation of its whole æsthetic temperament. The Italians cannot have been singularly and pre-eminently successful in painting without displaying some of the painter's qualities in all their artistic products. The Greeks cannot have made sculpture unapproachably complete without possessing a genius wherein the sculptor's bent of mind was specially predominant; and thus infusing somewhat of the sculpturesque into the sister arts. Painting for Italy and sculpture for Greece may be fairly taken as the

fully-formed and flawless crystals in a matrix of congenial, but not equally developed, matter. The ideal to which either race aspired instinctively in all its art was realised to the fullest, by the one in sculpture, by the other in painting. So we are justified in testing the whole of their æsthetic products by the laws of painting and of sculpture respectively. This, broadly stated, without economy of phrase or cautious reservation, is the reason why a student who has tried, however imperfectly, to assimilate to himself the spirit displayed in the surviving monuments of Greek art, is brought back at every turn to sculpture as the norm and canon of them all.

Whatever knowledge he may gain about the circumstances of Greek life and the peculiar temper of Greek thought, will only strengthen his conviction. The national games, the religious pageants, the theatrical shows, and the gymnastic exercises of the Greeks were sculpturesque. The conditions of their speculative thought in the first dawn of civilised self-consciousness, when spiritual energy was still conceived as incarnate only in a form of flesh, and the soul was inseparable from the body except by an unfamiliar process of analysis, harmonised with the art which interprets the mind in all its movements by the features and the limbs. Their careful choice of distinct motives in poetry, their appeal in all imaginative work to the inner eye that sees, no less than to the sympathies that thrill, their abstinence from descriptions of landscape and analyses of emotion, their clear and massive character-delineation, point to the same conclusion. Everything tends to confirm the original perception that the simplicity of form, the purity of design, the self-restraint, and the parsimony both of expression and material, imposed by sculpture on the artist, were observed as laws by the Greeks in their mental activity, and more especially in their arts. It is this which differentiates them from the romantic nations. When, therefore, we undertake to speak of the genius of Greek art,

we are justified in giving the first place to sculpture and in assuming that sculpture strikes the key note of the whole music.

To take a far more serious objection next. It is true that, while gazing intently upon the luminous qualities of the Greek spirit, we are tempted to neglect its sterner and more sombre aspect. Not, indeed, that the shadows are not there, patent to superficial observers, and necessary even to the sublimity of the ideal we admire in its serene beauty; but they are so consistently subordinated to light and lustre that he who merely seeks to seize predominant characteristics may find it difficult to appreciate them duly without missing what is even more essential. A writer on the arts of the Greeks is not bound to take into consideration the defects of their civil and domestic life, the discords and disturbance of their politics, the pains they felt and suffered in common with humanity at large, the incomplete morality of a race defined by no sharp line but that of culture from barbarians. It is rather his duty to note how carefully these things, which even we discern as discords, were excluded by them from the sphere of beauty; since it is precisely this that distinguishes the Greeks most decidedly from the modern nations, who have used pain, perplexity, and apparent failure as subjects for the noblest asthetic handling. The world-pain of our latter years was felt, as a young man may feel it, by the Greeks of the best age; but their artists did not, like Shakspeare and Michael Angelo, Goethe and Beethoven, make this the substance of their mightiest works. Ancient Hellas contained nothing analogous to Hamlet, or the Tombs of the Medici, to Faust, or the C minor Symphony. The desolation of humanity adrift upon a sea of chance and change finds expression here and there in a threnos of Simonides or an epigram of Callimachus. The tragic poets are never tired of dwelling upon destiny, inherent partly in the transmitted doom of ancestors, and partly in the moral character of indivi-

duals. The depth of Pindar's soul is stirred by the question that has tried all ages: "Creatures of a day! What are we and what are we not?" Such strains, however, are, as it were, occasional and accidental in Greek poetry. The Greek artist, not having a background of Christian hope and expectation against which he could relieve the trials and afflictions of this life, aimed at keeping them in a strictly subordinate place. He sought to produce a harmony in his work which should correspond to health in the body and to temperance in the soul, to present a picture of human destiny, not darkened by the shadows of the tomb, but luminous beneath the light of day. It was his purpose, as indeed it is of all good craftsmen, not to weaken, but to fortify, not to dispirit and depress, but to exalt and animate. The very imperfect conceptions he had formed of immortality determined the course he pursued. He had no hell to fear, no heaven to hope for. It was in no sense his duty to cast a gloom over the only world he knew by painting it in sombre colours, but rather to assist the freedom of the spirit, and to confirm the energies of men by bringing what is glad and beautiful into prominence. In this way, the Greeks, after their own fashion, asserted that unconquerable faith in the goodness of the universe, and in the dignity of the human race, without which progress would be impossible. Though the life of man may be hard and troublous, though diseases and turbulent passions assail his peace, though the history of nations be but a tale that is told, and the days of heroes but a dream between two sleeps, yet the soul is strong to rise above these vapours of the earth into a clearer atmosphere. The real way of achieving a triumph over chance and of defying fate, is to turn to good account all fair and wholesome things beneath the sun, and to maintain for an ideal the beauty, strength, and splendour of the body, mind, and will of man. The mighty may win fame, immortal on the lips of poets and in the marble of the sculptor. The meanest may

possess themselves in patience and enjoy. Thus the Greeks adopted for their philosophy of life what Clough described as a "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance" of the world. They practised a genial accommodation of their natures to the facts which must perforce regulate the existence of humanity. To ascertain the conditions of nature, and to adapt themselves thereto by training, was the object of their most serious schemes of education. Later on, when the bloom began to pass from poetry and art, and the vigour of national life declined, this attitude of simple manliness diverged into hedonism and asceticism. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, said one section of the thinkers. Let us bear all hardness, lest we become the slaves of chance and self, said the other. But neither proposition expressed the full mind of the Greeks of the best age. They clearly saw that, in spite of disaster and disease, life was a good thing for those who maintained the balance of moral and physical health. Without asceticism they strove after well-ordered conduct. Without hedonism they took their frugal share of the delightful things furnished by the boon earth in prodigal abundance. The mental condition of such men, expectant, grateful, and serenely acquiescent, has been well expressed by Goethe in lines like these :—

> That nought belongs to me I know
> Save thoughts that never cease to flow
> From founts that cannot perish,
> And every fleeting shape of bliss
> That kindly fortune lets me kiss
> And in my bosom cherish.

It is this mental attitude which I think must be regained by us who seek firm foothold in the far more complicated difficulties of the present age. While it is easy, therefore, to omit the darker shadows from our picture of Greek life, because, although they are there, they are almost swallowed up in brightness, it is not easy to exaggerate the tranquil and manly spirit with which the Greeks faced the evils of the world and

rose above them. Owing to this faculty for absorbing all sad things and presenting, through art, only the splendour of accomplished strength and beauty, the Greeks have left for the world a unique treasure of radiant forms in sculpture, of lustrous thoughts in poetry, of calm wisdom in philosophy and history. Their power upon all arts and sciences is the power of a harmonising and health-giving spirit. This it is which, in spite of their perception of the sterner problems of the world, obliges us to describe their genius as adolescent; for adolescence has of strength, and sorrow, and reflection so much only as is compatible with beauty. This, again, it is which makes their influence so valuable to us now, who need for our refreshening the contact with unused and youthful forces.

At the same time, while insisting upon the truth of all this, many of the chapters in the present volume have forced upon our minds what is severe and awful in the genius of the Greeks. The Chthonian deities form a counterpart to the dwellers on Olympus. The voice of the people in the Hesiodic poems rises like the cry of Israel from Pharaoh's brickfields rather than the song-like shout of Salaminian oarsmen. Who, again, in reading the *Iliad*, has not felt that the splendour of Achilles, coruscating like a star new-washed in ocean waves, detaches itself from a background of impenetrable gloom? He blazes in his god-like youth for one moment only above the mists of Styx, the waters of Lethe; and it is due to the triumphant imagination of his poet that the consciousness of impending fate adds lustre to his heroism instead of dooming him to the pathetic pallor of the Scandinavian Balder. When we meet Achilles in Hades, and hear him sigh,

> Rather would I in the sun's warmth divine
> Serve a poor churl who drags his days in grief,
> Than the whole lordship of the dead were mine,

we touch the deepest sorrow of the Greek heart, a sorrow lulled to rest in vain by anodynes of Eleusinian mysteries and

Samothracian rites, a sorrow kept manfully in check by resolute wills and burning enthusiasms, but which recurred continually, converting their dream of a future life into a nightmare of unsubstantial *ennui*. If the story of Achilles involves a dreary insight into the end of merely human activity, that of Odysseus turns immediately upon the troubles of our pilgrimage through life. Exquisitely beautiful as are all the outlines, surface touches, and colours in the *Odyssey*, as of some Mediterranean landscape crowded with delicate human forms, yet beneath the whole there lies an undertone of sombreness. The energy of the hero is inseparable from endurance.

τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης.

That is the exclamation of no light-hearted youngling, but of one who has sounded all the deeps and shallows of the river of experience. And if we have to speak thus of the heroes, what shall we say about the countless common people following their lords to Troy in the cause of a strange woman, those beautiful dead warriors over whom the Æschylean Chorus poured forth the most pathetic of lamentations? To pretend that the Greeks felt not the passion and the pain of human agony and strife, would be a paradox implying idiocy in him who put it forth. Still, it were scarcely less feeble to forget that their strength lay in restraining the expression of this feeling, and in subduing its vehemence. The wounded heroes on the Æginetan pediment are dying with smiles upon their lips; and this may serve as a symbol for the mode of treatment reserved by the Greek artists for what is dark and terrible.

Enough has been already said while dealing with the dramatists about the profound morality and the stern philosophy of the Greek tragic poets. It is not necessary again to traverse that ground. Yet for a moment we may once more remember here what depths of pity and of pathos lie hidden in

the legend of Prometheus, whether we think of him as the divine champion of erring men at war with envious deities, or as personified humanity struggling against the forces of niggardly nature. Prometheus and Epimetheus and Pandora dramatise a legend of life supremely sad—so sad, indeed, that the calm genius of the Greeks regarded it with half-averted eyes, and chose rather to blur its outlines than to define what it contained enough of sorrow to unman the stoutest. Poets of a northern race would have brooded over this mythus until it became for them the form of all the anguish and revolt and aspiration of the soul of man. Not so the Greeks. Hesiod leaves the Saga in obscurity. Æschylus employs it to exhibit the spirit unperturbed by menaces of mere brute force, and wisely pliant in the end to unavoidable fate. Subsequent poets and philosophers remember Prometheus together with Orpheus only as the founders of the arts and sciences that make men happy. To eliminate the mysterious and the terrible, to accentuate the joyous and the profitable for humane uses, was the truest instinct of the Greeks. Even the tale of Herakles, who chose the hard paths of life, and ascended at last only through flames to clasp Hebe, eternal youth, upon Olympus, "with joy and bliss in over-measure for ever," in spite of its severe lesson of morality, is a poem of beautiful human heroism from which the discordant elements are purged away.

To recover, if that be possible, this "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance," and to face the problems of the world in which we live, with Greek serenity, concerns us at the present time. Having said thus much, I am brought to touch upon the third topic mentioned at the outset of this chapter. Owing to insufficient exposition, I did not in my first series of *Studies of Greek Poets* make it clear in what way I thought the Greeks could teach those of us for whom the growth of rationalism and the discoveries of science have tended to remove old landmarks. What we have to win for ourselves is

a theory of conduct which shall be human, and which shall be based upon our knowledge of nature. Greek morality was distinguished by precisely these two qualities. In its best forms, moreover, it was not antagonistic to the essence of Christianity, but thoroughly in accord with that which is indestructible in Christian teaching. It therefore contained that vital element we now require.

A remarkable passage in Sir H. S. Maine's Rede Lecture for 1875 will force itself upon the attention of all who believe that there are still lessons to be learned from the Greeks by men of the nineteenth century. "Whatever may be the nature and value of that bundle of influences which we call Progress," he writes, "nothing can be more certain than that, when a society is once touched by it, it spreads like a contagion. Yet, so far as our knowledge extends, there was only one society in which it was endemic; and putting that aside, no race or nationality, left entirely to itself, appears to have developed any very great intellectual result, except, perhaps, Poetry. Not one of those intellectual excellencies which we regard as characteristic of the great progressive races of the world—not the law of the Romans, not the philosophy and sagacity of the Germans, not the luminous order of the French, not the political aptitude of the English, not that insight into physical nature to which all races have contributed—would apparently have come into existence if those races had been left to themselves. To one small people, covering in its original seat no more than a handsbreadth of territory, it was given to create the principle of Progress, of movement onwards and not backwards or downwards, of destruction tending to construction. That people was the Greek. Except the blind forces of Nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin. A ferment spreading from that source has vitalised all the great progressive races of mankind, penetrating from one to another, and producing results ac-

cordant with its hidden and latent genius, and results of course often far greater than any exhibited in Greece itself."

It may be difficult to form an accurate notion of what the eloquent lecturer meant by Progress: it may be easy to object that the secret of progressive growth in politics at least was not possessed by the Greeks themselves, and that Christianity, which has certainly moved far more efficiently than any other spiritual force whatever in this world, was as certainly neither one of the blind forces of Nature, nor yet Hellenic in its origin. Still, there is a truth in this passage which remains unimpaired. It expresses largely, and without due reservation, perhaps, what the students of the Greeks in relation to the universal history of civilisation must feel to be a sweeping truth. The advance of the human intellect is measured by successive points of contact with the Greek spirit—in Rome before the birth of Christ, in Islam during the exhaustion of the Roman Empire, in the schools of Paris and Seville during the Middle Ages, when Averrhoes and Aristotle kept alive the lamp of science, in Italy at the period of the Renaissance, when Greek philosophy and poetry and art restored life to the senses, confidence to the reason, and freedom to the soul of man. All civilised nations, in all that concerns the activity of the intellect, are colonies of Hellas. The flame that lives within our Prytaneia was first kindled on Athene's hearth in Attica; and should it burn dim or be extinguished, we must needs travel back to the sacred home of the virgin goddess for fresh fire. This we are continually doing. It is this which has made Greek indispensable in modern education. And at the present moment we may return with profit to the moralists of Greece.

At this point I feel that my former critics will exclaim against me: "This is the very same offence repeated—ignoring the moral inferiority of the Greeks, he holds them up as an example to nations improved by Christianity." I reply that I

am far from forgetting the substantial advance made by the world in morality during the last eighteen centuries. The divine life and the precepts of Christ are as luminous as ever; and I, for one, have no desire to replant pseudo-paganism on the modern soil. I know full well that, in addition to its being undesirable, this is utterly impossible. I know, moreover, that new virtues, unrecognised by the Greeks, have been revealed to the world by Christianity, and that a new cogency and new sanctions have been given by it to that portion of ethics which it had in common with Greek philosophy. It is not the morality, but the moral attitude, of the Greeks that seems to my mind worthy of our imitation. In order to make this distinction clear, and to save myself, if that may be, from seeming to advocate a retrograde movement, through sentimental sympathy with impossible anachronisms, or through blind hostility to all that makes our modern life most beautiful, I must be permitted to embark upon a somewhat lengthy exposition of my meaning. With no desire to be aggressive or polemical, I want to show what, in my judgment, even Christians have still to learn from Greeks.

The three points in which the morality of the Greeks was decidedly inferior to that of the modern races were slavery, the social degradation of women, and paiderastia. No panegyrist of the Greeks can attempt to justify any one of these customs, which, it may be said in passing, were closely connected and interdependent in Hellenic civilisation. An apologist might, indeed, argue that slavery, as recognised by the Athenians, was superior to many forms of the same evil till lately tolerated by the Christian nations. Mediæval villeinage and Russian serfdom, the Spanish enslavement of Peruvians and Mexicans, and the American slave-trade flourished in spite of the theoretical opposition of Christianity, and have only succumbed to the advance of rational humanity. The same advocate could show, as Mr. Mahaffy has already done, that in Greece there existed a

high ideal of womanhood. All students of history will, however, admit that in relation to the three important points above mentioned, the Greeks were comparatively barbarous. At the same time it cannot be contended that these defects were the necessary and immediate outcome of the Hellenic philosophy of life. It is rather proper to regard them as crudities and immaturities belonging to an early period of civilisation. During the last two thousand years the world has advanced in growth, and its moral improvement has been due to Christian influences. Still, the higher standing-ground we have attained, our matured and purified humanity, all that elevates us ethically above the Jews and Greeks, can be ascribed to Christianity without the implication that it is inextricably bound up with Christian theology, or that it could not survive the dissolution of the orthodox fabric. The question before us at the present moment is, Whether, admitting the comparatively rude ethics of the ancient Greeks, and fully recognising the moral amelioration effected for the human race by Christianity, we, without ceasing to be Christians in all essential points of conduct, may not profitably borrow from the Greeks the spirit which enabled them to live and do their duty in a world whose laws are yet but imperfectly ascertained? Was there not something permanently valuable in their view of the ethical problem which historical Christianity, especially in its more ascetic phases, tends to overlook, but which approves itself to the reason of men who have been influenced by the rapidly advancing mutations of religious thought during the last three centuries? The real point to ascertain, with regard to ourselves and to them, is the basis upon which the conceptions of morality in either period have rested. Modern morality has hitherto been theological: it has implied the will of a divine governor. Greek morality was radically scientific: the faith on which it eventually leaned was a belief in φύσις, in the order of the universe, wherein gods, human societies, and individual human beings had their proper

places. The conception of morality as the law for man, regarded as a social being forming part and parcel of the Cosmos, was implicit in the whole Greek view of life. It received poetical expression from the tragedians; it transpired in the conversations of Socrates, in the speculations of Plato, and in the more organised system of Aristotle. ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν could be written for a motto on the title-page of a collected corpus of Greek moralists. It may be objected that "to live according to nature" is a vague command, and also that it is easier said than done, or, again, that the conception of nature does not essentially differ from that of God who made nature. All that is true; but the ethics whereof that maxim is the sum have this advantage, that they do not place between us and the world in which we have to live and die the will of a hypothetical ruler, to whom we may ascribe our passions and our fancies, enslaving ourselves to the delusions of our own soul. Nor, again, do they involve the monstrous paradox of all ascetic systems, which assert that human nature is radically evil and that only that is good in us which contradicts our natural appetites and instincts. Evil and sin are recognised, just as fevers and serpents are recognised; but while the latter are not referred to a vindictive Creator, so the former are not ascribed to the wilful wickedness of his creatures. In so far as we gain any knowledge of nature, that knowledge is something solid: the whole bearing of a man who feels that his highest duty consists in conforming himself to laws he may gradually but surely ascertain, is certainly different from that of one who obeys the formulæ invented by dead or living priests and prophets to describe the nature of a God whom no man has either seen or heard. It makes no difference that the highest religious systems are concordant with the best-established principles of natural science, that the Mosaic ordinances, for example, are based on excellent hygienic rules. That the αἴσθησις of the great Nomothetæ should be verified is both intelligible and, *à priori*, highly

probable. The superiority of scientific over theological morality consists meanwhile in its indestructibility.

The ethics of man, regarded as a member of the universe and answerable only to its order for his conduct, though they underlay the whole thought of the Greeks on moral subjects, did not receive their final exposition till the age of the Roman Stoics. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius have, therefore, a peculiar retrospective value, owing to the light they cast upon the ethical perception of the Greek race, while at the same time they illustrate that which is unalterable and indestructible in the spirit of Greek morality. What Marcus Aurelius enunciated as an intuition, is what must daily become more binding upon us in proportion as we advance in scientific knowledge. It will not, therefore, be out of place to sketch the main points of his system in a separate paragraph, keeping always in mind that this system was the final outgrowth of Greek speculation after prolonged contact with the Romans. Marcus Aurelius forces to the very utmost a view of human life and duty which could have been but unconsciously implicit in the minds of men of the Periclean age. Yet this view was but the theory logically abstracted from the conduct and the perceptions of a race which started with refined nature-worship, which recognised the duty to the State as paramount, and which put to philosophy the question, What is the End of man?

The central notion of Marcus Aurelius is Nature. He regards the universe as a ζῶον, or living creature, animated by a principle of life to which he sometimes gives the title of θεός, or the deity. It is a body with a λόγος, or reason, attaining to consciousness in human beings. Every man participates in the κοινὸς λόγος, or common reason of the Cosmos, a portion of whose wisdom forms his intellect. In other words, our consciousness reflects the order of the universe, and enables us to become more than automatically partakers in its movement. To obey this reason is the end of all philosophy,

the fulfilment of the purpose for which man exists. By doing so we are in harmony with the world, and take our proper place in the scale of beings. Nothing can happen to us independent of this order; and therefore nothing, rightly understood, can happen to our hurt. If disease and affliction fall upon us, we must remember that we are the limbs and organs of the whole, and that our suffering is necessary for its well-being. We are thus the citizens of a vast State, members of the universal economy. What affects the whole for good is good for us, and even when it seems to be evil, we must hold fast to the faith that it is good beyond our ken. Our selfishness is swallowed up in the complete and total interest. Our virtues are social and not personal. Our happiness is relative to the general welfare, not contained in any private pleasure or indulgence of an individual caprice.

The motto of this large philosophy is Goethe's often-quoted distich :—

> Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen
> Resolut zu leben.

If we seek a motto for the *Imitatio Christi*, which may be accepted here as the Christian encheiridion, we find it in the text: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The author of that manual of conduct regarded the universe not as a coherent whole, good and sound in all its parts, to live in harmony with the laws whereof is the duty of man, but as a machine created out of nothing by the will of God, made fair at first, but changed to foul by sin, wherein men live an evil life, to escape from which brings happiness, to confound the existing laws of which is virtue, and a remedy against the anarchy and tyranny of which can only be found in the Cross and death of Christ. To the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, man was not merely a citizen of the dear city of God, but a member, not merely a μέρος, but a μέλος of the divine life of the universe. To the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, man was an exile from his

home, a wanderer and out of place. It is not my present purpose to push to their ultimate and logical conclusions the divergences between the Stoicism of the *Meditations* and the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, but rather to recall attention to the philosophy developed by Marcus Aurelius from his conception of man's place in nature, and to show that the ethics resulting from it are specially adapted to an age in which the scientific habit of mind is the strongest. When the whole mass of new knowledge we are continually accumulating forces upon our consciousness the conviction that humanity is a part of the universal whole, it is impossible to cling to dogmas that start from the assumption of original sin and creation vitiated at the very moment of its commencement. So much of the Christian programme, whatever else is left as indestructible, must be abandoned. Nature, with all its imperfections in the physical and moral orders, both of them to be as far as can be conquered and eradicated, must be accepted as it is, as that which was intended so to be. Nor need we adopt the obsolete tactics of the French Deists, or depreciate the essence of Christianity, because a great part of its mythology and metaphysic seems untenable. On the contrary, we may reasonably hold that the most perfect man would live the life of Christ in obedience to the maxims of the Roman Emperor, and that Christianity provides us with precisely what was wanting in the Aurelian system. Faith, love, purity, obedience, subordination of self, benevolence—all these are Christian virtues, raised to the height of passionate enthusiasm by their exemplification in the life of Christ. Stoicism stood in need of a criterion. What is reason? what is the true character of truth and goodness? Christianity appears with a criterion which approves itself to our intuitive apprehension. The life of Christ is the perfect life. Learn that, and follow that, and you will reach the height of human nature. To live in harmony with the universe is to live as Christ lived. It is the

wrong done in the name of Christ, the figments falsely stamped with Christ's superscription, the follies of Bibliolatry and dogmatic orthodoxy, that must be abjured, and I maintain that in our present mood the best hope of not casting away the wheat together with the chaff, of retaining what is fit for human use in Christianity, consists in first assuming the scientific standpoint of Aurelius.

From this digression on the Aurelian system, regarded as the final word of Græco-Roman morality, I pass to a consideration of those urgent needs of modern thought which have to be met in the spirit and with the courage of Mark Antonine. Not his theism, nor his metaphysic, nor his detailed maxims for conduct, but his attitude and temper have to be adopted. And here it must be said once more, by way of preface, that however human progress is ruled by thesis and antithesis, by antagonism and repulsion in its several moments, still nothing can be lost that has been clearly gained. Each synthesis, though itself destined to apparent contradiction, combines the indestructible, the natural and truly human, elements of the momenta which preceded it, excluding only that in them which was the accident of time and place and circumstance. Thus the Greek conception of life was posed; the Christian conception was counterposed; the synthesis, crudely attempted in the age of the Renaissance, awaits mature accomplishment in the immediate future. The very ground-thought of Science is to treat man as part of the natural order—not, assuredly, on that account excluding from its calculation the most eminent portion of man, his reason and his moral being—and to return from the study of nature with profit to the study of man. It does not annihilate or neutralise what man has gained from Christianity; on the contrary, the new points of morality developed by the Christian discipline are of necessity accepted as data by the scientific mind. Our object is to combine both the Hellenic and the Christian conceptions in a third, which shall be more solid and

more rational than any previous manifestation of either, superior to the Hellenic as it is no longer a mere intuition, superior to the ecclesiastical inasmuch as it relies on no mythology, but seeks to ascertain the law.

The positive knowledge about the world possessed at any period by the human race, cannot fail to modify both theology and metaphysic. Theology, while philosophising the immediate data of faith, professes to embrace and account for all known facts in a comprehensive system, which includes the hypotheses of revelation; while popular religion rests upon opinions and figurative conceptions formed concerning the First Cause of the phenomena observed around us and within us. The systems of theology and the opinions of popular religion must, therefore, from time to time in the world's history, vary according as more or less is actually known, and according as the mind has greater or lesser power of analysing and co-ordinating its stores of knowledge. Metaphysic is the critical examination and construction into a connected scheme of the results obtained by experience—mental, moral, and physical—subjected to reflection, and regarded in their most abstract form as thoughts. It follows of necessity that any revolution in the method of observation and analysis, like that which has been going on during the last three centuries, whereby our conception of the world as a whole is altered, must supply metaphysic with new subject-matter and new methods, and force it to the reconsideration of important problems. Meanwhile, the faculty of thought itself undergoes no essential transformation; our mental and moral nature remains substantially the same. What has always happened, and what alone can happen, is that fresh pabulum is offered to the thinking being, which has to be assimilated to its organism and digested for its nourishment. Consequently we cannot expect to have a sudden and illuminating revolution in psychology and ethics. But, while we learn fresh facts about the universe, our notions concerning the nature of the

First Cause and the relation of man to his environments, whether expressed in systems by theology and philosophy, or in opinions by popular religion, must of necessity be exposed to alteration. To adjust ourselves to this change without sacrificing what is vitally important in religion as the basis of morality is our difficulty.

Physical science, to begin with, has destroyed that old conception of the universe which made this globe central, and of paramount importance. The discoveries of Galileo and Newton first led to a right theory of the planetary movements. The chemists of the last hundred years have substituted an accurate analysis of primitive substances for rough guesses at the four elements. The establishment of the law of the conservation of force has demonstrated the unity of all cosmical operations from the most gigantic to the most minute. Geology, together with the speculations of comparative anatomists and naturalists, has altered all our notions with regard to the age of the world, and to the antecedents and early history of the human race. The results gathered during the last three centuries in these and other fields of investigation render it certain that mankind has occupied but a brief moment in the long life of our globe, and tend to prove that our duration here will, at an enormously, but not incalculably, distant period, be rendered impossible by the action of those very forces which called us into being. The years of humanity are therefore "a scape in oblivion." Man, for whom, according to the author of Genesis, the sun and moon and stars were made, is shown to be among the less important products of the cosmical system. We are no permanent owners, but the brief tenants of our tiny globe. Nor need this terrify or startle us. Each man expects the certainty of his own dissolution. The race must learn that it also is ephemeral. For this our religions have already prepared us. But what is new in the prospect revealed by science is that, not by a sudden tempest of vindictive fire from heaven,

but in the tranquil course of the long life of nature, such euthanasia is prepared for men. As the universe subsisted countless æons before our birth, so will it survive our loss, and scarcely keep a trace of our existence.

At the same time the spiritual conditions of humanity remain unaltered. Men we are; men we must be: to find out what is truly human, essential to the highest type and utmost happiness of man, is still our most absorbing interest. Nor need we abandon that noblest of all formulas: "To fear God and to keep his commands is the whole duty of man;" provided we are careful to accept the word God as the name of a hitherto unapprehended energy, the symbol of that which is the life and thought and motion of the universe whereof we are a part, the ideal toward which we are for ever struggling on the toilsome path of spiritual evolution, the unknown within us and without us which is the one vital irremovable reality. Science, which consists in the determination of laws,* compels us to believe that, as in the physical world invariable sequences are observed, so also in the moral nature of man must comprehensive rules and explanations of phenomena be observable. It is but the refusal to apply to moral problems the scientific method with unflinching logic which leads certain otherwise positive thinkers to recognise "the freedom of human volition" as an incalculable element, and thus to withdraw human conduct from the sphere of exact investigation. To know God in the physical order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be in the economy of primæval forces. To know God in the moral order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be within the region of the human consciousness. To obey God in the physical order is to control those forces for our own use as far as our constitution will permit; for thus we energise in harmony with the universe. To obey

* "General conceptions in which a series of similarly recurring natural processes may be embraced."—*Helmholtz.*

God in the moral order is to act in accordance with those hitherto discovered laws which have carried the race onward from barbarism to self-knowledge and self-control, and with all our might and main to strive for further precision in their determination. But even here is the debatable ground; here is the point at issue; here confessedly is the region that has never yet been subjected to science.

The analogy of scientific discovery forces us to look no longer for the actual fiats of a divine voice on Sinai, but to expect that by interrogating humanity itself we shall ultimately demonstrate those unchangeable decrees by conforming to which our race may pass from strength to strength. We must cease to be clairvoyants and become analysts, verifying our intuitions by positive investigation. For the old term Commandment, which implies the will of a sovereign, our present condition of knowledge leads us to substitute the new term Law as defined above.* This, although the subject-matter and even the practical result remain unchanged, is no slight alteration. It implies a new notion, both popular and scientific, of the divine in nature, a new criterion of what is right and wrong, and in the last resort a new metaphysic.

But with a view to this end we have to introduce a more stringent and painstaking method into ethics. We must be content to abandon dogmatism upon insoluble questions, however fascinating and imperious; we must above all things quit delusions, however sanctioned by ancient reverence. And here both faith and courage are needed. To believe that the moral laws are within us, requiring to be disentangled, without the aid of an authentic revelation, from the mass of phenomena, in the same way as physical laws have been abstracted from facts by scientific reasoning, demands a virile and firm confidence in the order of the universe and in the intellectual faculty of man.

* P. 394, note.

Hitherto in ethics we have proceeded on the *à priori* road; we have assumed certain hypotheses, or supposed fixed starting-points, concerning the origin and the destiny of mankind, about both of which things we know absolutely nothing for sure. Starting with a theological system, which accounted for the creation of man and the nature of evil in close connection with a definite but delusive cosmogony, taking a future state of happiness or misery for granted, we have brought our dreams to bear upon the springs of conduct. It is precisely at this point that science, partly by the revolution effected in cosmical theory, partly by the exhibition of the true method of analysis, helps to free us from what is fanciful, and to indicate the right way for the future. It has proved in one realm of knowledge that an advance toward truth must not be expected from systems professing to set forth the causes of phenomena, but from a gradual and patient exploration of the phenomena themselves. Not matter, but the qualities of what we call matter as subject to our senses, are the object of physical science. Not God, but human conduct, must be the object of moral science, albeit the ideal that guides human conduct will continue to be worshipped as our God. Nor will it here avail to demur that the human will is essentially free, and therefore not subject to law in the strictly scientific sense. Each step we make in the investigation of heredity, and all the other conditions to which man is subject, forces us more and more plainly to the conclusion that the very seat of our supposed liberty, our desires and personal peculiarities, distinctive tastes and special predilections, are determined for us in great measure by circumstances beyond our own control. The force of these circumstances separately and in combination could be estimated if we possessed but the complete data for forming such a calculation; nor does this certainty destroy the fact that each new personality introduces a new element into the sequence. It narrows the field wherein volition can move freely, but leaves the soul still

self-determining and capable of being shaped. What is really incalculable is not the sphere of action for the individual, but the source of energy in the universe, in vital connection with which we live both physically and mentally. We are what we are, each of us, by no freak of chance, by no act of arbitrary spontaneity; and our prayers must take the form dictated by Cleanthes:

> Lead Thou me, God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life!
> All names alike for Thee are vain and hollow.
> Lead me; for I will follow without strife;
> Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.

For many centuries physical science itself suffered from the dead weight of abstract notions accepted as data, and was inert for want of a true method. Its recent successes are an index to the advance which moral science might make if it could adopt the right way of investigation, comparison, and reflective reasoning. At the same time it must be confessed that for moral science this method has not as yet been made either easy of application or fruitful of results. Our subject-matter is so complex, and so apparently distinct from sensible existence, as to seem intangible. Both thought and language are the heritage of countless generations, wherein a medley of guesses and confused conceptions, are stored. Of general laws in ethics we have as yet but instinctive, and as it were æsthetic, perceptions, fortified and enforced by theological beliefs, or converted into intellectual notions by philosophy. Still, this need not disturb us, when we reflect how long it was before the true method of scientific discovery in the analysis of matter was brought to light, and what a continuous progress from one determination to another followed upon the single law established in explanation of terrestrial gravity. The scientific solution of one ethical problem, whether that be ultimately effected through physiology by the establishment

of correspondences between the physical and moral functions of humanity, or through comparative history and the study of evolution, may prove as fruitful for ethics as the discovery of Galileo was for physics. It is impossible to utter dogmatic predictions at this point of our knowledge. Yet we may indulge in hopes that are of the nature of dreams. Can we not in this way venture to anticipate that the men of the future may obtain demonstrated certainty with regard to Man considered as an integral portion of the universe—that they may understand the conditions of his conduct as clearly as we now apprehend the behaviour of certain gases—and that their problem will be, not how to check healthy normal appetites, but how to multiply and fortify faculties? Can we not dream that morality will be one branch of the study of the world as a whole, a department of *τὰ φυσικά*, when *φύσις*, regarded as a total unity, that suffers no crude radical distinction of Mind and Body, has absorbed our scientific attention?

We need not fear that either the new notion of Deity forced upon us by the extension of our knowledge, even should this destroy the last vestige of anthropomorphism, or the involved application of a positive method to ethics, will lead to what is dreaded as Materialism. If Materialism be not a mere name, it is feared because it is thought to imply egotism, immersion in sensuality, and indifference to ideas. But what is the prospect unrolled before us by Science? * What is, in effect, the new intellectual atmosphere to which we must acclimatise our moral and religious sensibilities? Surely the most sublime, the most ideally imaginative, which it has ever been given to man to contemplate. The spectacle of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, alike of the mental and

* By Science here and elsewhere, when used without a qualifying epithet, I mean to include what is also known as philosophy. In Science, thus understood, thought embraces the whole field of knowledge in a survey that has less in common with the metaphysics of the schoolmen than with the analytic method of the natural sciences.

the physical, the natural and the supersensible, subordinated to unchangeable laws, and permeated by one single energy, revealed to us by Science, contains nothing that need drive us to a stolid Atheism, but rather such considerations as give the value of positive certainty to Christ's words about the sparrow. We *know* now that the whole past history of the universe is involved in the blood-beats of the smallest animalcule discernible by the microscope, that the farthest fixed star to which our telescopes have any access obeys the laws that determine the action of our muscles, that our thought holds in solution the experience of all preceding ages. If the religion of the future is to be founded on scientific bases of this nature, there is surely here less room for the extravagance of egoism and sensuality than there was in the Catholic system, from which emerged a Sixtus IV. and an Alexander VI. What St. Paul conceived but dimly, the physicist declares to us: we are all parts and members of the divine whole. It is the business of Science not to make God nowhere in the universe, but everywhere, and to prove, what previous moralists have guessed, that the happiness and the freedom of man consists in his self-subordination to the laws of the world. whereof he is an essential, though an insignificant part. Against the decrees of God conceived as a sovereign subject to like fluctuations of emotion with ourselves, it was possible to offend again and again without losing the hope that at some facile moment, some *mollia tempora fandi*, He might be propitiated. The laws of the world are inexorable; they alone enforce with absolute equity the maxim τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν.

Instead of Materialism it might be more reasonable, perhaps, to dread Fatalism; but Fatalism is a rock on which all systems, philosophical and religious, when carried to abstract conclusions, have tended to drift. Science cannot be more fatalistic than Calvinism; yet the instinctive belief in the liberty of the individual has survived all logic, and is likely still to do so till

such time as the prevailing intuition shall be positively proved. And even were the conviction that we are not free agents in the old sense of the phrase to be forced upon us, the sting of fatalism would be extracted together with the belief in an omnipotent personality, framing men of set purpose for honour and dishonour. It was the clash of the human and the divine wills, both equally finite, though the latter was isolated by abstraction and ticketed with the epithet of infinity—in other words, the fiction of a despot ruling over slaves—that gave its terror to necessity.

Before the latest discoveries of physical science, as before the highest philosophical analysis, the cruder distinctions of soul and body, spirit and matter, tend to disappear. The nature of the universe is proved too subtle for this dichotomy. Only a coarse intelligence will, therefore, run to the conclusion that so-called Matter, with its supposed finality, is absolute; or that so-called Thought, with its supposed infinity, is universal. The finer intelligence, convinced of the correlation between these apparently antagonistic moments, must pause to contemplate the everlasting sequences of time past extended into time to come, and in the end must feel persuaded of its own indissoluble connection with that, whatever it may be, which is permanent in the universe. The moment Now is a potential eternity. That we are, is a sufficient proof that we have been, and that we shall be. Each act, as it has had immeasurable and necessary antecedents, will be fruitful of immeasurable and necessary consequents; for the web of the world is ever weaving, and to drop a thread in it is utterly impossible. That we are such or such is, again, the proof that our qualities have in them something significant, both for that which has been, and for that which will be for everlasting. We have been, we are, we shall be, a part of the eternal complex. Not therefore are we at liberty to assume definite propositions concerning what is called the Immortality of the Soul. To do so in the

present state of knowledge would be as much a begging of the question as to dogmatise upon the so-called Personality of God. Suspension of judgment is as imperatively required of us by Science as faith in the unintelligible was demanded by the Catholic Church. As then trial of the faith wrought patience, so now wise abstinence from dogmatism is the attitude of faith.

Following this course of thought into particulars, we have no reason to apprehend that personal licence should result from a system of purely positive ethics based upon that conception of our relation to the universe which Science is revealing. On the contrary, we may expect from the establishment of such a system a code of conduct more stringent in all that can concern the well-being of the individual than any that has yet been conceived. In the future, sensual excess will surely be reckoned a form of madness, and what we now dignify by the name of vice will be relegated, shorn of Satanic lustre, to the lazar-house. Nor need we fear that purely mental problems should lose their value or become less interesting. No amount of demonstration that the mind is dependent on the brain can so confuse the reason of a lucid thinker as to make him conclude that therefore there is no mind. Reduce all our emotions, our habits, our thoughts, to modes of cell-existence—prove that thinking and feeling are functions of nerve-centres—the mystery has only shifted its centre of gravity; we are still ourselves for better or for worse; thought and feeling are still the essential part of us; man remains, in spite of all, the only known being to whom the command γνῶθι σεαυτὸν has been given, together with the faculty of obeying this command. Physical Science does not exclude her elder sisters Philosophy and Religion, though she may compel religion to abandon mythology, and supply philosophy with new worlds for analysis. What she does is to substitute solid, if slowly-discovered,

knowledge for guesses, and a patient but progressive method for the systems which ontologist after ontologist has built and pulled to pieces. Will not the men of the future look back with wonder on the ages in which religion, philosophy, and the science of nature were supposed to be at war, instead of being, as they will be then, one system?

THE END.

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